

Institutional feedback report

Name of institution	University of the Western Cape
Date of institutional visit	7 March 2016
Names of peer reviewers	Dr Angela James Dr Antoni Szubarga
Additional reviewer	Prof Elizabeth de Kadt
Name of CHE person involved in the visit	Professor Diane Grayson
Date draft report submitted to institution	1 March 2017
Date of final report	31 May 2017

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO QEP PEER REVIEWER REPORTS

Four focus areas were selected for Phase 1 of the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) with which all institutions were asked to engage, namely: (1) enhancing academics as teachers, (2) enhancing student support and development, (3) enhancing the learning environment, and (4) enhancing course and programme enrolment management. In September 2014 each university produced a baseline submission that addressed the following questions for each focus area:

- Which aspects of your institution's Strategic Plan relate to this focus area? (Please be specific by quoting from the Strategic Plan).
- What activities do you currently have in place related to this focus area that are successful? What evidence do you use to conclude that they are successful? (Do not provide detailed evidence, just a description of the type of evidence you collect and a short summary of the results.)
- What activities related to this focus area have you initiated during the past three or four years that have not been as successful as you had hoped? In what ways were they unsuccessful? What do you think might be the reasons for the lack of success?
- What activities have you recently implemented or are you planning to implement in the next 12 to 18 months related to this focus area? Why have you chosen these particular activities? What is the need or problem they are intended to address?
- What are the challenges or problems related to this focus area that still need to be addressed in your institution?

The submission also included an introductory section on the contextual features of the institution that are salient to student success, a description of how the submission was prepared, and a concluding section on other activities the institution was undertaking to promote student success and challenges being faced.

Universities were asked to submit final reports by 11 December 2015 that indicated improvements that had been made or were being planned since the baseline reports were submitted. The stated aim of the report is shown below.

The aim of the institutional report is to demonstrate efforts to bring about enhancements in each of the four Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) focus areas since the beginning of Phase 1 of the QEP in February 2014, reflect on the journey towards enhancement and assess the extent to which the efforts have resulted in improvements.

Because of widespread student protests in the last few months of 2015, some reports were submitted early in 2016. In the final report, for each focus area universities responded to the following questions:

- Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in [this focus area] in one or two paragraphs.
- During Phase 1 of the QEP, what changes at institutional level (a) have been made, (b) are in progress, or (c) are in the planning stages that relate to enhancing academics as teachers?

- Provide one or more (but not more than 5) exemplars to illustrate specific aspects of the changes that are successful. Provide evidence for claims of success. Where an activity is in the planning stages, indicate what evidence will be collected.
- Provide one or more (but not more than 5) exemplars of changes that have not been successful and suggest reasons.
- If possible, identify one or more promising practices related to this focus area. Describe the practice and provide evidence for success. Suggest what the key features might be.
- Identify the main challenges the university still faces in relation to this focus area.

The document also included an introduction that described how the report was prepared and a concluding section on reflections on Phase 1 of the QEP.

During 2016 and early 2017 individual institutional visits were carried out by two peer reviewers and the Director: Institutional Audits. The CHE communicated with the DVC Teaching and Learning or Academic to find a suitable date for the visit, and then a formal letter was sent to the Vice-Chancellor, which included the names of the peer reviewers and a request to indicate whether he or she felt there was a serious conflict of interest. In addition to logistical matters, the letter described the purpose and format of the visit as follows:

The purpose of the institutional visit is to provide a structured opportunity for institutional leaders to engage with peer reviewers external to the institution about the journey they are taking towards improvement in the QEP focus areas, the milestones achieved, the challenges encountered along the way and the plans for further improvement. It is also an opportunity for institutions to receive feedback on their engagement with the focus areas and suggestions for what else they might consider doing, or doing differently, based on what is being learned in and with the sector. Please note that we are interested in what is being done at your university that relates to the four Phase 1 focus areas, not just designated QEP activities.

The broad frame for the visit is appreciative inquiry (AI), originally developed by Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987)¹. AI is a strengths-based approach to change management that uses the “positive core” of an organisation as the starting point for growth and improvement. In contrast to problem-solving – trying to fix what is – it employs a generative method to envision what does not yet exist. While it is impossible for peer reviewers to engage in a full-blown AI process, the institutional visit is intended to focus on the positives as a springboard for thinking about what to enhance and how.

During the visit we would like to meet with the following groups of people over the course of the day:

1. Senior management (60 minutes)
2. Key role players involved with Focus Area 1 (80 minutes)
3. Key role players involved with Focus Area 2 (80 minutes)
4. Key role players involved with Focus Area 3 (80 minutes)

¹ Cooperrider, D.L. & Srivastva, S. (1987). Appreciative inquiry in organizational life. In Woodman, R. W. & Pasmore, W.A. (Eds), *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, Vol. 1, Stamford, CT: JAI Press, 129-169.

5. Key role players involved with Focus Area 4 (80 minutes)
6. Senior management (30 minutes for feedback)

The team will have read the university's QEP baseline report and final report. At the meetings, the team may ask for further information beyond what was in the two documents. The university may also wish to bring additional information to the meetings.

The selection of participants is up to you. However, we hope that you will be able to be part of the first meeting, and if possible, the last. For the meetings with senior management, we would like to speak with people who have the authority and responsibility to implement and drive initiatives at institutional level that relate to the four focus areas of Phase 1 of the QEP². For the meetings on the focus areas, we hope that students will be included.

Several weeks before the institutional visit, the two peer reviewers were sent the institutions' two reports, two articles on Appreciative Inquiry and the peer reviewer manual, which contains, among other things, a list of possible questions and detailed guidelines for the peer reviewer report. Immediately prior to each institutional visit, the peer reviewers and the Director: Institutional Audits spent most of a day preparing for the visit by going through the institution's two submissions in detail. During this preparatory meeting, several specific questions for the senior management were formulated and areas in which the panel wanted more information were identified for each focus area. The meetings that took place during the institutional visit were audio-recorded, and the audio files were sent to the peer reviewers after the visit for reference.

Each peer reviewer report is based on three data sources: the institution's baseline submission, the institution's final report and the content of the meetings during the institutional visit. As stated in the letters to the VCs, institutions could provide additional information during the visit. Some institutions did provide further documentation to elaborate on specific issues during the visit or, by agreement, emailed additional documentation immediately after the visit; in these cases such documentation was also taken into account in writing the report. It was necessary to limit the scope of the work in this way to ensure that the work could be completed within a specified time frame and also to be fair to all institutions.

Following receipt of the peer reviewers' reports, the CHE undertook a process of editing and harmonisation of the reports (to ensure a reasonable level of consistency among them) before sending them to institutions. In the initial letter to each VC it was indicated that the reports would be sent to the institutions for corrections, but that institutions were not expected to add new information at this stage. After the corrections were received from institutions, the final report was produced; new information was not included. It is hoped that the report will be a useful resource for an institution in its own journey to improvement. In addition, the reports will be among the documents that the CHE will use to produce a document synthesising what has been learnt during Phase 1 of the QEP across the sector. The final reports will serve at the Institutional Audits Committee and the Higher Education Quality Committee for information.

² (1) Enhancing academics as teachers, (2) Enhancing student support and development, (3) Enhancing the learning environment, (4) Enhancing course and programme enrolment management.

1. INTRODUCTION

The University of the Western Cape (UWC) plays an important, distinctive academic role in providing quality higher education for historically marginalised individuals, and has overcome its legacy of geographical location and spatial positioning within the apartheid higher education landscape to become, in addition, one of the country's leading research institutions.

The majority of UWC students come from extremely poor and educationally disadvantaged rural backgrounds, thus posing an associated set of teaching and learning challenges for the institution. In addition to the depth of the socio-economic challenges that these individuals present (including, for example, the challenge of affording the tuition costs), approximately two-thirds of UWC students entering the university have parents with no experience of higher education study. This is an important contributing factor to students' preparedness for higher education study, and contributes significantly to the social capital that students bring to their university experience and future employment prospects. Responding adequately to this situation places an enormous financial burden on UWC, which, nonetheless, remains committed to keeping its fees as low as possible to ensure that poorer students have access to higher education. But the low fee base generates limited funding that can be applied to addressing students' educational challenges.

These factors are exacerbated by environmental issues. UWC is located in an urban wasteland surrounded by underdeveloped industrial land as well as very poor, densely populated communities, who are therefore not able to provide the socio-economic activities that typically support universities, such as infrastructure for sporting or cultural activities or even easy access to shops and food outlets. Services, such as safe and affordable public transport, are also poorly developed. Residence students do not have easy and safe access to recreational facilities, while day students often have to travel long distances to and from campus. On the other hand, the surrounding communities do provide a rich source of indigenous knowledge.

With growth in student numbers, the campus requires serious expansion and reorganisation of the physical location of its academic departments and student services. Similarly, old infrastructure requires urgent updating and attention. The backlogs in infrastructure development are far from resolved, but creative approaches to adapt and modernise the University's infrastructure, in an attempt to improve students' experience and success, have been adopted by university management.

UWC has structured its strategic realignment and growth over the past thirteen years by means of five-year Institutional Operating Plans (IOPs), with the current IOP covering the period 2010 -2014. The first phase of the QEP coincided with two important changes at UWC: the appointment of new senior leadership, including the Vice-Chancellor and DVC: Academic, and the development of the IOP for the period 2015-2019, which has as overall theme 'Accelerating Students' Success'. Unfortunately, the student protests delayed the completion of the new IOP. The new approach introduced by Executive leadership is seeking

to address the academic project as a whole, not just teaching and learning in isolation. The institution terms this revised approach 'desiliorisation'. This approach is reflected in a number of ways. For instance, there is cross-functional committee membership: crucial 'support' portfolios (Library, e-learning) are represented on the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee, the Deputy Deans for Teaching and learning are involved in the Senate Academic Planning Committee (which also deals with the resource implications of new qualifications) and there is academic representation on the Student Support and Development sub-committee of Senate. Similarly, the emerging IOP is establishing 14 cross-function / cross-institutional projects for the coming five years. Examples are: the operation of the university in a digital age, internationalization, the 21st century graduate and transformative leadership. Within this shifting context, UWC's final report sought to report on the four focus areas of the QEP in a 'desiliorised' way.

The approach to developing the new IOP has been highly inclusive, resulting in noteworthy buy-in at all levels within UWC. A dozen task teams were led by executive members and deans, and junior and senior staff (from all areas of the university, academic and support) assisted in drafting vision papers, which were then widely discussed across the institution. Similarly, student input was solicited by means of online portals, and management is currently engaging further with students around their submissions. This level of inclusivity is most noteworthy and could serve as an example for other institutions.

It was stressed that UWC was by no means seeing the QEP simply as a compliance exercise, but that the promotion of teaching and learning excellence the QEP envisages is being thoroughly embedded in the IOP and thereby in the institution. In this way there was a clear sense of commitment to the QEP process and engagement with the focus areas by senior management.

The new IOP will be placing a renewed focus on learning (to complement the advances already made in teaching). In addition, the new IOP is seeking to respond to key contextual features of our times: the rapid changes in the digital era, changing expectations of students with regard to learning technologies, and the changing nature of the graduate. Key factors in the IOP will include flexible learning provision, epistemological access and success, professionalization of teaching and learning, improving the status of teaching and learning, incorporating research with learning, and national developments, including promoting social justice, citizenship and social inclusion. At the same time, in terms of UWC's 'desire to be research-led in everything that we do', there is a growing commitment to the scholarship of teaching and learning and to the scholarship of engagement, which are both being seen as important components of Scholarship@UWC. A separate research budget specifically for the funding of SOTL has been introduced.

Under the leadership of the DVC: Academic, the QEP is being further embedded through the devolved model adopted for teaching and learning support at UWC. The seven faculties, on the one hand, collaborate with the centralised Directorate of Teaching and Learning (DTL), the Centre of Innovative Educational and Communicative Technologies (CIECT),

and the Academic Planning and Community Engagement Directorates. Importantly, however, support for teaching and learning has also been decentralised into Faculties through the appointment of Deputy Deans of Teaching and Learning, and Learning Specialists in most faculties. This devolved model has secured campus-wide participation and resulted in real involvement by faculty teaching staff.

Preparation for the baseline QEP report interfaced with institutional thinking and engagement about the next IOP, and provided a valuable opportunity for reflection on past successes and challenges. The submissions therefore reflect the outcome of an institutional process which brought together both professional support and academic staff involved in the four focus areas of the QEP. Four teams were formed, with each member responsible for collecting relevant documentation in the designated focus areas and engaging where necessary with relevant stakeholders. This process was co-ordinated by the Directorate for Teaching and Learning, which was then responsible for collating the different sections for the Quality Enhancement Project Baseline Report (1 September 2014). The final report (22 January 2016) was prepared by referring to the previous QEP report: the relevant role-players from each of the Focus Areas met and developed their sections which were then collated. The final report was drafted by the DVC: Academic, from a strategic perspective.

It was unclear to what extent there had been student participation in the development of the QEP reports; the panel regretted the lack of student voice in the interviews.

2. FOCUS AREA 1: ENHANCING ACADEMICS AS TEACHERS

(Including professional development, rewards and recognition, workload, conditions of service and performance appraisal)

THE INSTITUTION'S STRENGTHS

Prior to the QEP, UWC was already committed to enhancing academics as teachers. This was given prominence, firstly, in Goal 2 of the 2010-2014 IOP, where Strategy 1 speaks directly to enhancing the status of teaching and learning and prioritising its professionalization across the institution.

Enhancing academics as teachers is, as to be expected, embedded within the institution's overall approach to enhancing teaching and learning. Hence professionalization of teaching is included and given great attention in UWC's *Strategic Plan for Teaching and Learning*, which was developed in 2009 to guide the implementation of the IOP. The Plan outlines a range of objectives, including enhancing and promoting the status of teaching and learning at UWC, developing and promoting the scholarship of teaching and learning and professionalising teaching through formal and informal education for academics. Its implementation is supported by an *Implementation Plan for Teaching and Learning* where each of the objectives is linked to specific actions, expected outcomes, and a particular performance measure to monitor and evaluate progress. The Implementation Plan is updated every year and provides the framework for annual reporting by the Directorate for Teaching

and Learning to Senate. A central focus of activity over the last five years has been the cascading of the Strategic Plan into each of the university's seven faculties. This has involved building awareness about the objectives of the Plan and its connection to UWC's broader strategic goals, and supporting the faculties in making meaning of the Plan and its objectives in relation to their own disciplinary area and teaching and learning challenges.

Enhancing the position of academic staff as teachers was also given attention in Goal 4 of the IOP 2010-2014. This goal focuses on the institution's human capital and the kind of talent and knowledge that is needed among its staff to deliver its core functions and achieve its strategic objectives. It emphasises that for this to happen, including for academic staff to function as effective teachers, the nature of the workplace and the conditions under which staff work must continue to feature prominently on the institution's strategic agenda. Goal 4 furthermore foregrounds the notion of professionalism and what must be in place to "establish a more professional workforce". It notes that to achieve this, staff must have the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience to undertake the tasks assigned to them. Equally importantly, they should feel confident to carry out their work and demonstrate the commitment and values that they bring to their job.

UWC has set up a number of structures and posts to support teaching and learning, and the enhancement of academic staff as teachers. The Directorate of Teaching and Learning was established in 2009, and Senate and Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees were also set up. In terms of the devolved model, many faculties then appointed Deputy Deans Teaching and Learning, supported by Learning Specialists. (Unfortunately it appears that a number of the learning specialists have since resigned.) The Deputy Deans are responsible for the implementation of the Strategic Plan and for the overall improvement of teaching and learning across their faculty. The Deputy Deans sit on the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee and report regularly to their Faculty Boards and Teaching and Learning Committees.

The institutional baseline report mentioned a number of important initiatives to drive the enhancement of academics as teachers, including: recognition of teaching and learning as a required competency for academic advancement and appointment; policy frameworks that integrate core teaching and learning competencies into academic staff selection, appointment, probation and promotion; inclusion of the Deputy Deans Teaching and Learning in most key faculty committees and in academic reviews; integration of teaching and learning into the university's Performance Development System (PDS); and a cascade model for developing expertise in curriculum alignment by focusing on HODs. In addition, SOTL has been systematically promoted, not least by the allocation of ring-fenced research funding, and articles are now regularly being published in accredited journals. A new international journal of teaching and learning, *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*, was launched in 2013, and has had six successful issues. Finally, the professionalization of teaching has been supported through formal and informal education for academics: the short learning programme (SLP), *Induction into Teaching and Learning*, required for staff on probation; a range of teaching and learning retreats and workshops; the development and

initiation of a Postgraduate Diploma on Teaching and Learning, in partnership with SUN and CPUT; and SLPs delivered through the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC).

THE APPROACH TAKEN TO IMPROVEMENT

UWC has continued to build on the considerable work that had already been undertaken or initiated prior to the implementation of the QEP, and which is being further shaped and driven by the DVC: Academic. This has involved initiatives within the institution and within Faculties (SLPs, workshops, SOTL, policy implementation, committee work) but also initiatives undertaken in collaboration with other universities (SLPs, research projects), primarily but not only those in the Western Cape. Much of this work was led by the Directorate for Teaching and Learning.

The Senate Teaching and Learning Committee appears to be playing a very useful role, with quarterly reports on progress being submitted by the Faculties, focusing on six areas derived from the IOP. This is felt to give all faculties a good sense of what is happening across the institution, and allows systemic issues to be raised. In this way, an informal institution-wide community of practice around teaching and learning is developing.

There is also a focus on developing Heads of Departments as key role players in enhancing teaching and learning in their departments. There is an annual retreat for new HODs.

IMPROVEMENTS UNDERTAKEN AND PROGRESS MADE

Professional development

The activities of the Directorate of Teaching and Learning are designed to support Faculty Deputy Deans Teaching and Faculty Learning Specialists to operationalise and implement the priorities of the UWC's strategic objectives. The Directorate of Teaching and Learning has regular monthly meetings with these stakeholders to discuss the progress faculties are making towards meeting these goals and to plan for further interventions to achieve these goals.

Short courses, mainly associated with staff induction, have been developed and are offered regularly, with good attendance numbers. These include Teaching and Learning induction workshops, and the short course, *Towards the professionalization of Teaching and Learning*. The latter is a semester long course which guides academics in the development of a teaching portfolio over 14 weeks. It was presented for the second consecutive year in 2015 after having been amended based on participant feedback at the end of 2014. The course will be offered again in 2016. Both of these courses are facilitated jointly by the Directorate of Teaching and Learning, staff from CIECT and learning specialists from the Faculties. Substantial numbers of staff (69 during 2014 and 2015) have now attended the 'professionalization' course. The university is succeeding in attracting young academics, for whom learning how to teach at university is a "no-brainer", as one of the deans put it, as teaching is part of their work. The attitude and participation of young academics in

professional development is helping to create a more positive institutional climate towards teaching.

The Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC) continues to offer a variety of short courses available to academic staff at the four regional institutions in the Western Cape, and UWC staff are both participants and course leaders. Topics covered include emerging technologies, tutorials, assessment, writing for publication, and teaching portfolios.

UWC is paying considerable attention to the development of teaching portfolios, beyond the course mentioned above. The UWC Senate resolved that staff members should develop a portfolio for purposes of probation and promotion. A new nurturing process for ad hominem promotion is presently being piloted, involving the Directorate for Teaching and Learning, Faculty Learning Specialists, and CIECT. This is seeking to move staff away from last-minute development of their teaching portfolio, and rather spreading the process across a full year. Heads of Departments, together with Deputy Deans of Teaching and Learning, regularly host sessions with staff members to reflect on their courses. In addition, staff who do not immediately want to apply for promotion are encouraged to nevertheless develop a teaching portfolio. The goal is to move staff away from a compliance approach, and to encourage deep reflection around teaching. (The visit of Professor Thomas Olsson from Lund University, hosted by the CHE, was mentioned as having been very useful in this regard.) Teaching portfolios are also included in programme reviews, institutional reviews, and professional board assessments.

The Directorate of Teaching and Learning has also concentrated on promoting the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning across faculties, most recently focusing on the Foundation or Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP). Staff members attending scheduled writing-for-publication workshops were able to submit their manuscripts to a special issue of the *South African Journal of Higher Education* that focused on Extended Curriculum Programmes (SAJHE Volume 29 Issue 1). Three additional manuscripts from UWC staff attending the ECP writing for publication workshops were published in accredited journals in Pharmacy. The initiation and establishment of a new journal, *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning*, which has already produced six issues, has strengthened the University's focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning.

The Directorate of Teaching and Learning also hosted Prof Jan Herrington who is well known for her work on authentic learning and design-based educational research. This included an extended meeting with Deputy Deans of Teaching and Learning and Learning Specialists over two days. A focus emerged on how authentic learning and design-based research could be developed and used, both to improve students' learning opportunities at UWC and to inform the scholarship of teaching and learning. It is envisaged that these processes will continue.

A major project during 2014 was the final development of the new regional Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, which in 2015 was co-hosted and co-taught across three higher education institutions in the Western Cape, UWC, CPUT and

Stellenbosch University. UWC interviewees felt that a lot had been learnt from this developmental collaboration, in terms of the different approaches adopted by the three institutions. Similarly, participants in the PGDip are brought into contact with colleagues from other institutions, which leads to further useful and enjoyable ‘crosspollination’. Participation in the PGDip in Higher Education Teaching and Learning is presently voluntary, and a clear policy on participation could be considered for the future development of new (and more experienced) academics. Interviewees felt that more work could be done on positioning the PGDip (which carries 128 credits and is therefore time-consuming) as worthwhile for academics.

In 2016 the Directorate of Teaching and Learning will facilitate the development of a *Teaching and Learning Implementation Plan* which will be aligned to the new IOP 2016-2020. Each of the faculties will subsequently develop their own Teaching and Learning Plans. The institution is planning to review assessment practices in line with a digitally-influenced curriculum, especially in light of the examination disruptions that recently affected all higher education institutions. With the greater adaptability and variation possible with digital affordances for assessment, UWC is working towards a context in which assessments might be both more pedagogically sound and flexible for students. There will also be a focus on the pedagogical approaches of authentic learning and inquiry-focused learning, and workshops will be rolled out to develop understanding and capacity in these areas.

The interviewees confirmed the very positive spinoffs from the various teaching and learning initiatives for the faculties. The devolved faculty model adopted by UWC was creating ownership within the faculties, with everyone now feeling part of the teaching and learning environment. Rather than a top-down, lecture-driven approach, the induction SLPs were allowing participants to work with their own teaching materials and thereby to see the relevance of the programme for their own discipline. There were several mentions of a mind-shift taking place in younger staff, who were finding real value in the induction programme and other programmes. (Admittedly, mention was also made of older staff who persisted in traditional ways of teaching.) In this way, teaching and learning was now being seen as absolutely fundamental to the academic project at UWC, as scholarly and research-driven: ‘You are a scholar. And part of that scholarship involves how you reflect on your teaching and how, hopefully, you publish on that’. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning at UWC has advanced significantly over the past four years, and, as a result, some staff members are now pursuing their doctorates in teaching and learning; some of the institution’s foremost scholars have been willing to take on the role of Deputy Dean Teaching and Learning. Increasingly, teaching is not being seen as competing with research, but as complementing research.

Of significance are the several NRF-funded national (and international) research projects to which the Director of Teaching and Learning has been giving leadership. The research involved in an earlier project on Professional Development of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education has been concluded, and the report is now being written; this may well

impact on institutional (and national) understandings of professional development for academics. Two further NRF inter-institutional SOTL projects were awarded to the Director of Teaching and Learning in 2014, both focusing on Socially Just Pedagogies in South African Higher Education. Both projects involve nine national and a number of international HEIs as part of the research team, and six new PhD students have been recruited to the project. A seminar series on Socially Just Pedagogies was also initiated from February to December in 2015, which was co-hosted by the Directorate of Teaching and Learning and the Faculty of Arts. The combination of this and the NRF projects on socially just pedagogies has placed UWC in a good position to implement a focus on socially just pedagogies from 2016, and to develop scholarship in this field.

UWC does not have a standardised approach to teaching evaluations, and this is currently under debate. However, the point was made that the use of standardised evaluations may not necessarily result in optimal information being gathered. The University requirement is that module evaluations are managed through module coordinators. On the other hand, the Faculty of Dentistry is currently implementing twice yearly evaluations (to allow for course development during the second half of the year), which are managed by year coordinators (rather than the module coordinators), using a standardized form across modules to allow for comparison; this appears to be improving the quality of information obtained through student evaluations. The point was also made that it is important that evaluations are acted on (which, in earlier years, was a concern raised by students.) Evaluations are now being included in Teaching and Learning workshops, where attendees consider how they can be used to improve teaching and learning.

Rewards and recognition

Since 2014, promotion requirements have included the submission of a portfolio to demonstrate excellence in teaching and learning, and this is now being more stringently implemented, with promotion applications being turned down if the portfolio is not sufficiently self-reflective. (The submission procedure for teaching portfolios has now also been changed to online submission, and the Director of CIEDT will be assisting staff with this.)

Faculty and institutional teaching awards are available, and there is a history of successful applications from UWC for the national CHE-HELTASA Excellence in Teaching and Learning awards.

In the interviews the point was made that the institution needs to strengthen UWC's reward and recognition system beyond promotions. The various awards and incentives around teaching and learning should be further institutionalized, not to compete with research, but to make sure that staff understand what a scholar should be, possibly along the lines of an A-rated scholar for teaching and learning.

In the interviews with the Library and CIECT, the topic of rewards and recognition emerged strongly: staff felt that in associated discussions during the development of the new IOP, no

space was being made for acknowledging the contributions of professional support staff to teaching and learning, and that consideration should be given to this issue.

Workload

The UWC does not have an institutional workload model – faculties and departments adopt their own approach to workload distribution. The main focus appears to be around the equitable distribution of undergraduate teaching, with little attention being paid to research, supervision load and time for professional development, such as participation in the PGDip. Some teaching relief is currently available for staff working on a doctorate. Workload in terms of postgraduate supervision load was also seen as a challenge in departments where many staff were themselves still engaged in doctoral study.

While there was consensus it would be useful to focus further on workload, at the same time it was noted that at UWC resources were extremely limited, and that possible resource implications of any proposed workload model should constantly be kept in mind.

Conditions of service

The interviewees considered UWC to have a good probation system. Staff on probation are required to attend both Teaching and Learning induction workshops, and the short course *Towards the professionalization of Teaching and Learning*, and to develop their teaching and learning portfolio. Three appraisal meetings are held during the two years of probation, which in the Faculty of Science involve the Dean, Deputy Deans and HOD. Discussions probe teaching and learning in depth, on the basis of the teaching and learning portfolio as it is being developed. This approach applies to incoming staff at all levels. (It was not clear to what extent this approach has been adopted in all faculties.) Progress is reported on through the committee system – for professorial appointments this includes reporting to the Joint Appointments Committee of Senate and Council. Instances were mentioned of probation being extended where it was felt that requirements were not being met.

Performance appraisal

UWC does not have an institutional performance appraisal system, but rather a developmental system. Formal performance appraisal, it was indicated, would be considered against the philosophy and background of the institution. The developmental system (which appears to work better in some faculties than others) involves the Dean, Deputy Dean, and/or HOD meeting with individual staff members, or groups of staff members, to discuss their performance, and to map out areas for development. Initial resistance (on the assumption that this approach involves ‘policing’) can be overcome by clarifying the developmental approach. However in some (many?) faculties this system is still ‘patchy’, as not all HODs are equally committed. The Faculty of Dentistry was mentioned as having a good system, which is underpinned by their also having to report to the HPCSA.

Faculty performance indicators are linked to institutional annual plans submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training. Planning takes place in September, and reporting in April. This involves senior management, and this year also the Deans, who are required to report to their portfolios. However, this does not involve a performance contract that is signed with an individual.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

No mention was made of teaching staff on temporary appointments. The UWC might consider strategies for ensuring that temporary staff, especially part-time staff members, participate in appropriate professional development activities. A clear policy on participation in the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Teaching and Learning could be considered for the future development of (new and other) academics. UWC could consider ways of further ensuring the continued development of new staff after the two years of probation.

Current processes for course evaluation by students could be further strengthened, possibly through the development of a more standardised approach, including ensuring follow-through on the suggestions made by students for all evaluations.

The developmental appraisal system could be further strengthened, to ensure that it is rolled out adequately in all departments and faculties and does lead to the continuous development of all academic staff. (Does UWC have an institutional policy on developmental appraisal of academic staff, to guide such processes?)

It is suggested that UWC could pay further attention to workload distribution, which should ideally take into account all expected components of academic life; and specifically to consider ways of including professional development as one of these components. However, as indicated, any proposed workload model would clearly need to keep in mind the limited resources available at UWC.

With not all faculties represented in the interviews, it did not become clear to the panel to what extent institutional policies are being implemented consistently in all faculties. UWC might wish to pursue this further, in ways which could accommodate diverse needs and approaches appropriate to the various faculties.

The panel urges UWC to pay attention to the employment category, and conditions of service, of 'professional support' staff in the Library and CIECT, in order to recognise their considerable contributions to teaching and learning and to research on teaching and learning at the institution.

3. FOCUS AREA 2: ENHANCING STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

(Including career and curriculum advising, life and academic skills development, counselling, student performance monitoring and referral)

THE INSTITUTION'S STRENGTHS

In this focus area, too, UWC has a long and well-functioning tradition of student development and support. As part of students' holistic development, student experience is an overarching strategic focus of the UWC that achieves visible results. Student development and support is specifically accommodated within the IOP 2010-2014 as part of Goal 1. This Goal speaks both to the complexities of managing student enrolment growth so that all students "have the opportunity to obtain the highest levels of knowledge and skill to equip themselves to participate with confidence in our emerging democracy, and global knowledge economy", and to the nature of the support and development that the university must provide for this to happen. Hence the Plan proposes, "Placing the student at the centre of the academic project gives focus to our endeavours and provides us with the best way of managing these tensions to provide students with an environment in which they have a rich range of opportunities and are supported to participate in their studies and as active university role players to develop their full potential." The plan commits the University to strive towards the provision of programmes and interventions that are "based explicitly on relevant and desirable student learning and development outcomes and sophisticated ways of achieving them" and must be able to "provide evidence of its impact on the achievement of student learning and development outcomes" (IOP, 2010:10). As a research university, UWC also believes that to achieve these objectives, scholarship around these concerns must be supported and used to inform the implementation of its student development and support endeavours.

The Student Development and Support (SDS) portfolio is led by the DVC: SDS. There are a number of central sub-units in place: an Office for Student Development (within which a Career Services Unit is located); a Centre for Student Support Services; and an Academic Support Unit. Interestingly, UWC has instituted a Support and Development Services Senate Sub-Committee, which coordinates the various initiatives, and on which senior SDS staff are represented. SDS staff are also represented on Council, on Senate and on other Senate Committees, such as the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee. There is also collaboration at DVC level between Student Development and Support and the Academic portfolio, as UWC has a commitment to holistic student development which clearly encompasses both portfolios. At Faculty level there are Faculty Student Affairs Committees.

Noteworthy initiatives already in place and mentioned in the institutional baseline report include the following:

Programmes and interventions offering direct support to students: a two-week Orientation Programme; a peer mentoring programme (mentoring by senior students) spanning all faculties; a range of psychological counselling services; a service to students with disabilities, drawing on the social model of disability; athlete support programmes; 'Workstudy' programmes; tutorials and tutor development programmes; initiatives to accommodate adult learners, part-time students, and students entering through RPL (the

institution has developed a ‘framework for after-hours provision’ and has created an ‘After Hours Study Zone’); and numerous initiatives to support English language proficiency.

Programmes and initiatives focusing on the holistic development of students: graduate development programmes (extended curricula); career development, including Career Expos; a Leadership Academy; leadership training support to the SRC; promotion of volunteering and social responsibility; debates and conversation programmes; implementation of the SASSE survey; and the introduction of development officers in the residences. Several of these initiatives would appear to help create self-reliant and emancipated students.

Enhancing the scholarship of student development and support: organisation of colloquia and seminars; initiation of the online and open access *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* in 2013; support for staff participation in various scholarly activities.

Student development and support programmes are aligned with UWC’s *Charter of Graduate Attributes* to ensure that such attributes can be acquired through the co-curriculum.

It was noted that, for this focus area too, UWC struggles with the challenges of limited resources, particularly in a context where UWC students require high levels of support, and therefore has to work with lower staff capacity than would be desirable and to seek innovative ways to provide quality service.

The panel was of the opinion, that, especially bearing these serious constraints in mind, the initiatives in place were impressive and to be commended.

THE APPROACH TAKEN TO IMPROVEMENT

UWC has maintained current activities and structures and built further on what is already in place. It is noted that the change in top leadership at UWC has included the DVC: Student Development and Support, who is now leading work in this focus area. (Unfortunately the panel was not able to interview the DVC: SDS and her staff, due to their prior commitment for the meeting date.)

IMPROVEMENTS UNDERTAKEN AND PROGRESS MADE

Life and academic skills development

The numerous well-functioning programmes mentioned above were maintained.

The SDS portfolio has ensured that student experience as part of holistic development is being included as an overarching strategic focus in the new IOP. This has involved consultations with staff and students, as SDS is seeking to involve students as active and important voices in broader consultation processes. SDS is committed to ensuring

appropriate policies and enabling environments, including infrastructure, as key concerns for student development and support.

Further work was done on the introduction of a co-curricular record, which is to be implemented shortly. This is involving the development of an online co-curricular system, which students will access to capture their portfolio of experience; entries will subsequently be verified by the Registrar/ DVC: SDS. Specific criteria will be applied and learning outcomes clearly articulated.

In terms of UWC's focus on the scholarship of development, the third year of publication by the *Journal for Student Affairs in Africa* was completed, which will enable the journal to apply for accreditation by the DHET in 2016.

Student Services Updates and workshop alerts were provided to students through newsletters, emails and social media platforms (on a timed-communication basis)

A plan, including an implementation timetable, has been drafted to include the various strategic interventions (including infrastructure requirements) needed to enhance learning of differently abled students; this plan is to be implemented in 2016. This has involved a series of meetings with the leadership of the Differently Able Student Association (DASA), to discuss their expectations.

Tutorial support is offered to students, and enhancing tutorial programmes is one of the UWC's strategic projects.

Online support for students of various developmental initiatives was strengthened by an increased staff allocation to this service.

An annual reporting template for the departments on how they have implemented the IOP goals is being introduced as a monitoring tool.

Discussion is ongoing as regards some initiatives in the following areas:

Curriculum advising

This is currently available during Orientation. The Registrar's Office is currently reviewing the sequencing of Orientation and Registration, which may have an impact on the management of the current integrated curriculum advising. Curriculum advising is managed by the faculties, with curriculum advising by academic staff especially important in the two big faculties, EMS and Arts, due to the need to select major subjects. Student curriculum advising for second year students, similarly by academic staff, takes place towards the end of the previous year; it was stated to be compulsory in EMS and Arts Faculties, though seemingly not all students take advantage of it.

Student performance monitoring and referral

It was reported that a student tracking system that will enable the identification of at-risk students is in the final stage of implementation.

The main focus of the interviews was on the identification of so-called ‘ghost students’, who might be either students who are not registered but attending classes; or students who are registered but not attending classes. While there is follow-up on these two groupings, there does not at present appear to be an institutional approach. It is being suggested that the teaching and learning specialists in Faculties should follow up on registered students who are not attending classes; at presently this is done on an ad hoc basis only.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

It was clear from the submission that UWC management is aware of unevenness in roll-out of student development initiatives within faculties, of the need to strengthen student evaluation mechanisms further, and especially to find ways of closing the ‘feedback loop’; similarly, it was noted that the consolidation of SDS-type initiatives across campus, especially at the faculty level, requires more attention. The panel urges UWC to pay further attention to these important issues.

In discussing student support, little mention was made, specifically, of residence students, and of day students, as two distinct groupings with possibly some divergent needs; this might be taken into account in future developments.

UWC is urged to strengthen the tutor development programme.

The panel recommends further analysis of the SASSE results, and implementation of substantive findings.

Impact-monitoring measures of various support activities could be considered, and a system could be developed. This will enable the UWC to use its limited resources optimally.

The use of on-line systems, which are being introduced, will enhance flexibility in provision of support to students, and are encouraged. (Flexible learning and flexible provision have been included in the University’s strategic priorities and graduate attributes.)

The panel recommends the development of an institutional system for follow-up of registered students who are not attending classes.

4. FOCUS AREA 3: ENHANCING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

(Including teaching and learning spaces, ICT infrastructure and access, technology-enabled tools and resources, library facilities)

THE INSTITUTION’S STRENGTHS

Goal 7 of the IOP 2010-2014 speaks to development of the campus's physical and ICT infrastructure, calling, inter alia, for a Campus Master Plan to assist in reorganising the campus into distinct precincts, the active replacement of old prefabricated buildings and the renewing and repurposing of the existing infrastructure. Goal 2 of the IOP focuses on the role of the physical and ICT infrastructure as regards changing conceptions of teaching and learning. Blended learning (combining online and face-to-face teaching) is a strategic response of the UWC to the demands for an increased student intake, enabling the University to admit more students without requiring more buildings.

There has been a considerable amount of work undertaken in this focus area over the past years.

Infrastructure Planning and Development have completed a Campus Development Plan and an infrastructure audit, completed a number of new academic buildings, and added beds to on-campus student accommodation. Attention has been given to equipping all the main lecture facilities with computers, internet access and audio-visual equipment. In the context of the Greater Tygerberg Partnership, UWC has acquired a building in the Bellville CBD, to which departments in the Community and Health Sciences Faculty are to be relocated.

The ICT Infrastructure and Support (ICS) department manages and supports the infrastructure required to access all ICT applications across UWC, including: the main Student Administration and Systems Integration (SASI) system, with access from the local and wide area networks; the Storage Area Network (SAN) where daily, weekly and monthly backups are stored; and the Databases and Virtual Server clusters processing data and running reports. The ICS Operations and Service Desk teams also monitor key performance and health status metrics of the infrastructure and levels of service. Projects completed include the migration of student e-mails from Groupwise to gmail; the migration and replication of e-Learning's "Sakai" Learning Management System (LMS) to the in-house, on-premise Ikamva LMS platform; the upgrade of the Data Centre Computer facilities; and the upgrade of the UWC Core Network.

The Centre for Innovative Educational and Communication Technologies (CIECT) provides training and support to staff and students across faculties. Initiatives have included: e-tools training interventions in faculties; creation of online environments for 'joint' teaching purposes, both interdisciplinary and national/ international; regular blog posts to raise awareness about e-tools; skills training and support packages for academic and non-academic staff; training and support for students across faculties; offering of an integrated Digital Academic Literacy programme for students.

The Library is an active partner in the learning enterprise. This has included: participation of librarians in Faculty Teaching and Learning committees; provision of training opportunities for students; development of online guides; continued diversification of the types of learning spaces available (silent study areas; meeting rooms; Knowledge Commons; Reading Room; Reference Desks; Self Learning Zone; Disabled Student Centre; Print & Go Kiosks; and Training Rooms); extension of Library Opening hours; and creation of a Past

Exam Papers website. A feedback form for student comments is available through the Library website. The Library also has a long history of the acquisition of digital resources, which are only now being acknowledged by the University, in discussions around blended learning.

THE APPROACH TAKEN TO IMPROVEMENT

Given the ongoing changes in ICTs with relation to global trends and national imperatives in undergraduate education, work has continued to build on the above initiatives, to keep these appropriate and relevant, though funding challenges are constantly experienced.

Key structures involved are the Divisions of Infrastructure Planning and Development, and Information and Communication Services, the Centre for Innovative Education and Communication and Technologies (CIECT) and the Library. An infrastructure development plan has been submitted to DHET, bearing in mind UWC's particular physical constraints of being built on sand (so no buildings can be high rise) and being hemmed in by a nature reserve on one side and a major thoroughfare on the other.

In the institution's final report, the main focus was on the work of Library and of CIECT.

In line with the Research@UWC initiative, research projects undertaken within these structures have emphasised the interrelatedness of 'teaching-and-learning and research'.

IMPROVEMENTS UNDERTAKEN AND PROGRESS MADE

Teaching and learning spaces

This aspect was only briefly addressed in the final report and the relevant staff were not available for the interviews, therefore it is difficult to comment on improvements made. From comments made in the concluding section of the baseline report, it appears that the Campus Master Plan speaks to the need for flexible teaching space and the associated challenges with the current teaching spaces. 'A key priority is to address the shortage of teaching spaces on campus and to improve student success through the construction of new, flat floor classroom facilities to accommodate capacity projections, enhance technology and enable increased flexibility and interaction. In addition, the need for additional learning space is also articulated.' The baseline report listed several initiatives planned for the near future: the renewal and repurposing of two academic buildings; a process to address backlog maintenance across campus, which will also improve universal access concerns raised in the Infrastructure Audit; continued work with regional role-players in terms of the development of the sub-region. The final report mentions two additional infrastructure projects, to be completed during the next two years: the modernisation and customisation of decanted space on campus for a Computational and Mathematical Sciences Building; and the redevelopment, consolidation and customisation of a series of buildings in the Bellville central business area to accommodate some of the community and health sciences programmes. Both these developments will include customised teaching and laboratory space for the departments

and programmes involved. However it remains unclear to what extent UWC has been able to make progress with teaching and learning spaces during Phase 1 of the QEP, especially given the associated expense.

ICT infrastructure and access

This topic was briefly addressed as part of Focus Area 1 in the final report. Unfortunately the relevant staff were not available for the interviews, to provide further clarification. In the baseline report achievements to date and some future plans were mapped out: an audit of ICT equipment in lecture venues; migration of the Student Administration System (SASI) to a Microsoft.NET platform; a Wi-Fi densification project over the next 12 months; and the pilot of an interactive digital lecture capture, streaming and archiving solution. The panel could not ascertain to what extent these have been implemented.

The final report mentions as a ‘main challenge’ the need for improved ICT infrastructural developments, such as the provision of expanded Wi-Fi facilities, including across campuses. There is also a need to integrate IT systems as currently the University uses three different platforms. This, in turn, limits the University’s high-level data analytics capacity.

Technology-enabled tools and resources

CIECT has clearly been very active in a range of areas, generally continuing previous work with a few new developments. In the interviews the point was made that, looking back, CIECT is now in a ‘completely different space’ as regards uptake of technology-enabled tools; they have also been repositioned as now reporting to the DVC Academic rather than to ICS, in acknowledgement of their role in teaching and learning. Their critical role is to prepare and support students and lecturers for effective on-line engagement, the development of which has become more urgent as a result of students protests.

Knowledgeable and skilled staff members consult, advise, train and support both staff and students on the use of the institutional Learning Management System (LMS), iKamva, and other Personal Learning Environments (PLEs). Much of their work, and where there has been very substantial growth, involves collaboration with lecturers across various disciplines, with regard to pedagogy and sound instructional design activities, and the development of learning materials, especially ‘Just-in-time training and marketing material’ for both staff and students. They have developed several short courses, including *Design of Online Teaching Events*, *Creation of ePortfolios* and *Creation of a Digital Story/Digital Stories*. Moreover, the Team focuses on the design, development, integration and implementation of blended online environments for teaching and learning across geographical borders

Of importance is the large-scale Digital Academic Literacy programme, delivered in collaboration with Faculties and aligned to student needs; in 2016 it was offered to 2800 students. The programme equips students across UWC, many of whom have not had the opportunity to use a computer before entering HE, with basic academic digital literacy skills in software

packages such as Microsoft Word and Excel, email clients and internet browsers. This programme requires and receives regular updating.

CIECT has kept abreast of changes with regard to software development applications, which includes continuous cycles of maintenance, the upgrading of systems and applications, and the development of new applications. Recently a mobile app was developed, providing easy access to the institutional LMS, iKamva.

CIECT staff are research-led: they consider their research activities to be inseparable from their teaching and learning work, in that they reflect the evidence of these teaching, facilitation, assessment, moderation and design efforts. The team pursues publishing opportunities in top-tier journals and Google Scholar, and also shares their research through bi-annual webinars with the UWC community and the broader public.

Recent developments in faculties include the increasing use of online assessment e-tools (Psychology Department, English for Educational Purposes lecturers; Accounting Department; and the Interdisciplinary Health Programme); the use of digital storytelling in the Education Faculty to break language stereotypes; and an interactive online environment created for the English for Educational Development course. This last of these includes a discussion forum used as a communication and assessment tool, with students reviewing each other's posts and commenting constructively. The Physics Department has continuously developed an online learning environment, in collaboration with CIECT, since 2013, which now includes online videos, applets, interactive simulations, electronic assessment tasks and student evaluations.

Library

The library has also seen substantial developments. In the 2010-2014 IOP they were able to claim their space as supporting teaching and learning. They now sit on Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees and the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee and provide quarterly reports. UWC librarians are increasingly serving as educational resources for lecturers and students. Feedback from students is viewed by staff as an opportunity to improve their services.

The following developments were reported: the use of the Knowledge Commons facility by first year students during Orientation; the availability of additional equipment and software in the Hub for disabled students; and the introduction of a year-long co-curricular programme to broaden students' awareness of current affairs, culture, heritage and ethical issues. Library hours have also been extended to midnight during the week and 5 pm on Saturdays.

An important Library initiative has been preparation of a document entitled *Guidelines on embedding information literacy into teaching and learning at UWC*, based on the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* (produced by the American Library Association for the ACRL in 2015). Posters to illustrate understanding of the *Framework* were designed, and individual sample lesson plans produced. Some research has

also emerged in this regard. Interest has been indicated by 15 Departments, and pilots with two departments will commence in 2016. The Framework will now also form part of the institutional *Professionalisation of Teaching and Learning* course. Library staff are engaging themselves further with the *Framework*, as part of their ongoing professional development. Librarians are offering presentations on the many associated digital apps, and intend creating an online 'sandbox' of resources, including strategies for modelling knowledge practices in lectures, examples of learning activities and assessments. The Senior Librarian: Information Literacy has presented a webinar on the *Framework for Information Literacy* for the national professional group of academic librarians; and the Library will be presenting a two-day national workshop of institutional librarians in 2016. This is work in progress.

To promote more flexible use of digital resources and texts, the Library has begun to discuss open textbooks in teaching and learning meetings. Opportunities to promote OER, by growing numbers of high quality open books and open access journals, are being sought by the Library.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

CIECT is clearly doing an excellent job, and the enthusiasm and commitment of the Director was much appreciated by the panel. At the same time, the current CIECT model for implementing e-learning involves working with individual staff members, which, in spite of the undoubted benefits of this approach, is clearly placing the 20 staff in CIECT under considerable strain and is probably not sustainable. UWC and CIECT are therefore urged to consider alternative models, such as also working at a Faculty level, or possibly involving the Faculty Teaching and Learning Specialists more strongly.

UWC is urged to take forward the integration of digital literacies in mainstream teaching, in terms of the *Guidelines* developed by the Library.

In any renewal and repurposing of existing buildings (including the residences), or in any new construction, UWC is urged to pay attention to the inclusion of flexible teaching and learning spaces and of informal student learning spaces where students can study with other students or on their own, especially in that many students appear to be dependent on campus facilities to support their learning.

UWC is clearly aware of the need to roll out stable Wi-Fi as broadly as possible, and the panel supports this endeavour. Ongoing attention should be paid to having well-functioning Wi-Fi (with appropriate backup) in all learning venues. At the same time, consideration could be given to additional ways of making laptops or tablets available to students.

5. FOCUS AREA 4: ENHANCING COURSE AND PROGRAMME ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT

(Including admissions, selection, placement, readmission refusal, pass rates in gateway courses³, throughput rates, management information systems)

THE INSTITUTION'S STRENGTHS

Course and programme enrolment is given specific prominence in Goal 1 of the IOP, whereby UWC seeks 'to strategically attract, retain and enable the development of students in line with our vision and mission.' Strategy 2 of Goal 1 is focused on mission-centred approaches to enrolment and is carefully fused into the academic project to advance a purposefully transformative agenda. This strategic approach to enrolment management has guided enrolments at the university over the last five years. Strategy 4 of Goal 2 (teaching and learning) focuses on students at risk.

Over the past few years, UWC has increased and widened access and consistently exceeded its enrolment targets. Student growth has been embedded in the academic context by promoting and managing enrolment by field of study, a strategy to promote growth in specific areas. A culture of retention has been promoted through a set of coherent strategies aligned to strategic goals.

In recent years the ratio of available first-time entering places to applicants has remained at 1:10. UWC recently shifted its handling of admission decisions away from 'fairness on a first-come-first-serve basis', underpinned by administrative efficiency to meet quantitative targets, towards an emphasis on student success and academic excellence, but without compromising equity considerations. UWC has adjusted the NSC point score upwards, with minimum entry points in a number of programmes moving from 27 to 33, to attract a better quality of academic achievers. Stronger emphasis has been placed on high impact and gateway courses, and a series of academic interventions have been introduced to address this challenge.

A very important improvement for UWC has been the development of the Student Enrolment Management System (SEMS) to support strategic enrolment efforts. Some important developments through SEMS are: close to 100% of the student population has used online registration; the development of a Student Tracking System (STS) to help track applicant, student and programme-related information; and the implementation of a Marks Administration System (MAS), which has led to a pronounced decrease in mark adjustments. However, all the functionalities of the Student Administration System Integration (SASI) are not yet fully operational and require further attention.

THE APPROACH TAKEN TO IMPROVEMENT

In preparing its IOP for the next five years, the institution is ensuring that student success issues retain prominence. In this focus area, too, a research-based approach has been adopted: the Academic Planning Unit has undertaken several investigations by means of wide-ranging data

³ "Gateway courses" are those courses that have a large impact on students' ability to progress. They are typically prerequisites for other courses, and often have a large number of enrolments. At many universities, examples of gateway courses are first-year Mathematics and Economics. In some cases, if students fail a gateway course, they automatically have to extend their studies by one or two semesters.

analyses. Some new systems, and updates of existing systems, have been rolled out. The planned development of a Student Success System will enable the University to monitor, report on, and improve the effectiveness of intervention processes.

IMPROVEMENTS UNDERTAKEN AND PROGRESS MADE

Admissions, selection and placement

Revised processes and procedures have been introduced for the enrolment process, in order to align an academic offer with a residence offer and financial aid and/or merit bursary. This will involve rewriting of the Residence Management System (RMS), the Student Credit Management Systems (Excalibur) and the Financial Aid System (FinAid), to allow them to be tightly integrated with the Student Administration System Integration (SASI). This is to increase the number of finally selected students who actually register at UWC. A new Student Enrolment Management System (SEMS) that works from a single, integrated database and supports strategic enrolment efforts by optimising online transactions and yielding unduplicated data has been implemented. An important development through the SEMS is that close to 100% of the student population now use online registration. This has significantly reduced the number of errors and turnaround time in administrative business processes.

A selection guideline was established to assist with selection decisions in faculty management by the Dean and faculty managers. Selections are also focusing more precisely on disciplines which are essential to success in the envisaged qualification. For instance, with the introduction of the NSC, for a trial period UWC accepted both Maths and Maths Literacy for certain qualifications; once it became clear that Maths Literacy did not provide adequate preparation, the entrance requirements were changed to specify Maths only. As a result, there has been an improved trend of students being able to pass science courses. On the other hand, some other programmes decided to do away with the Maths requirement, so as not to restrict access unnecessarily. In addition, flexible curricula were approved by Senate Academic Planning, to allow entering students some leeway as to the choice of majors. Ongoing curriculum adjustment based on performance data is important in promoting student success. In such adjustments to admission requirements interviewees were very clear that UWC in no way will compromise on quality; however, UWC seeks, as far as possible, to enable access.

The quality of the applicant pool has improved over the past few years. It was suggested that this was due to positive leadership of the institution, a growing reputation for quality-based graduate output, the physical improvements to campus infrastructure, and more investment in recruitment, resulting in more successful Open Days. With a target market of students from middle and lower income families, UWC is well positioned vis-a-vis competitors in terms of quality for money. For 2016 a course/study programme chooser (which indicated the point score required for qualifications) was introduced on the UWC website, which seems to have been popular with 2016 applicants. Possibly as a result, the number of non-qualifying applicants in the UWC applicant pool has been reduced.

Most applicants in the region tend to write the NBTs, but they are not compulsory at UWC. The NBT is not used for admission purposes; a few programmes may use them for placement purposes, e.g. Dentistry. There is an intention to use NBT data for research purposes, but it appears that Faculties have not made use of these data. The question at the institution at present is whether or not to continue with the NBTs, with some maintaining, 'It's a luxury we can't afford financially.'

The Academic Planning Unit is also conducting research around admissions. A cohort study for the period 2010-2014 allowed analysis of entrance points score and subsequent performance through to completion, and confirmed the need to attract a better quality academic achiever. Some research on the relationship between NSC results and subsequent performance is ongoing; the main point of interest to date has been NSC performance in language, with evidence indicating that a lower mark in English is a better predictor of good performance than a high mark in Afrikaans. Given that most students are not English first language students, this research has enabled UWC better to understand their students' profile and associated challenges. The Community and Health Sciences faculty have embarked on action research; their analyses of characteristics of applicants have led to changes in admission requirements.

A present weakness in the point score system used at UWC is that it does not differentiate between Maths and Maths Literacy in allocating points; this needs to be addressed.

Readmission refusal

There has been discussion at the institution around the regulations governing readmissions, but the only example presented related to the extended curricula. The interpretation of a Department of Higher Education communique with respect to exclusions of students who failed a foundation programme was reviewed. UWC had interpreted it to mean that students enrolled in a foundation programme must progress to the next level of study, or else they would be excluded from both the programme and from the institution. The progression rules were revised and approved at Senate and now students registered in a foundation programme are allowed two years to complete all foundation modules.

Pass rates in gateway courses

UWC has a clear approach to identifying gateway courses. A set of 6 criteria have been developed by which a course is determined to be high impact, including: higher failure rate, high number of repeating students, whether the module is offered in other programmes and national impact. Through-put data of the past five years are used to determine the need for interventions such as summer and winter schools (funded by the institution), or compulsory tutoring.

Of particular interest is the 'decanting model', introduced in 2016 in the first year Maths year-long course. After the first term progress has been assessed, underperforming students are permitted to 'decant' into another module, which allows them to complete the first year Maths

course over two years. This alternative pathway was structured using data on throughput rates. It appears that this model is proving popular with students.

The Accounting programme was also discussed, where the first year Accounting course functions as a gateway for progress to second year. Here two interventions have been introduced: a summer school for students who wish to persevere, or curricular flexibility which allows students to switch to a different professional programme. Compulsory advising by academic staff assists in the process.

It was unclear whether other faculties had identified such gateway modules and introduced interventions.

Throughput rates

According to the baseline report, UWC has retained an average year-on-year retention rate of 81% in 2012 and 2013 respectively across all faculties and an average undergraduate retention rate of 89%; these figures have remained stable. Degree credit rates have been monitored continuously and appropriate interventions implemented to maintain an average degree credit rate of 80%. Improving throughput has been discussed regularly in working towards the new IOP.

The final report notes that the data from the 2010-2014 cohort studies has pointed to some areas of concern, which UWC hopes to address during the next IOP phase. A few undergraduate programmes show higher than average rates of exclusions at senior undergraduate levels, namely, in third and fourth year. The factors contributing to under-performance at these levels in the specific programmes will be investigated further, in order to design and implement appropriate interventions in 2016.

An Annual Planning process was initiated and piloted in 2015, which requires the Deans to submit reports, including student throughput rates. Interviewees were in agreement that there is a developing culture in the institution to make throughput rates more visible, and the data more accessible. A business intelligence project is planned for 2016 that will help the University make data-drive decisions.

Staff are working on a retention approach which is coordinated and multidimensional, beginning at module level where measures are put in place.

Research by the Academic Planning Unit and by Faculties is seeking to understand drop-out. Academic reasons and, to some extent, financial reasons for drop out can be accessed in the system, but the social reasons are much harder to ascertain and understand. The research also involves focus group with successful students, in order to move beyond quantitative data, and to understand what promotes success. It was acknowledged that reasons for failure are complex, and that interventions therefore have to be multi-dimensional; there are no simple solutions. The planned development of a Student Success System will enable the University to monitor, report on, and improve the effectiveness of intervention processes.

Management information systems

The MIS being used at UWC is a home-grown system and can therefore be updated regularly. There appear to be challenges in enabling the MIS and the Learning Management System to talk to each other, and a review and further development is planned for 2016. However, the Student Tracking System (STS) and Early Warning System (EWS) have been rolled out and key stakeholders in the faculty were trained and provided access to use the system. Teaching and Learning specialists are envisaged as monitoring the system and putting in place any necessary follow-up. There are still challenges with implementation, in terms of up-take from lecturers and weighting of modules; some assessments (e.g. portfolio assessments) become available too late to allow for meaningful interventions. However, where lecturers can assess speedily (e.g. by MCQ) and report promptly, the system works well. Some identification of at-risk students is still managed manually. This works well where staff capacity is available and student numbers are not too high, and is in line with the UWC culture of engaging with individual students through an open door policy. But with growth in student numbers, this approach is becoming increasingly difficult and an institutional system approach is likely to become essential.

The data analytics capability of the STS also allows students with debt and students in residence with debt to be identified. Staff have been trained in this functionality, and were able to proactively enable such students to register in 2016.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

UWC is urged to work on the full implementation of the Student Tracking System and to embed this in faculties, in order to be able to rely on a system approach to monitoring of student performance. This will involve ensuring that all lecturers are on board; that the necessary marks can be submitted timeously; and that capacity is identified to monitor the system and to implement the necessary interventions and follow-up.

UWC is similarly urged to continue work on the various systems associated with student management, to ensure that they speak to each other fully.

6. SUMMARY

The panel wishes to commend UWC on its long-standing and productive approaches to enhancing teaching and learning. Excellent work has been done in all four of the QEP focus areas over many years, giving UWC a strong platform on which to build further. All four focus areas were well embedded in the 2010-2014 IOP, which in itself was the outcome of a very inclusive institutional process, ensuring excellent buy-in. The devolved, Faculty-based model adopted for implementation has ensured substantial Faculty buy-in and noteworthy staff commitment. A similarly inclusive process to develop the next IOP is being followed.

It is especially commendable that, in all focus areas, developments have been underpinned by research of various types, much of which is presently ongoing. It appears that the

importance of institutional data is being widely accepted at UWC, with the Faculties also involved in research, and research findings being used to underpin new developments and modifications to existing practices. The strong commitment to SOTL has begun to position teaching as complementary to research, rather than as in opposition to research, as at many institutions.

Specific comments on each of the focus areas are given below.

Focus Area 1: Enhancing Academics as Teachers

UWC clearly has a lengthy tradition of focusing on academic staff development and has sought to embed these activities within the university. One very noteworthy strength is the high level of University-wide participation in the development of the IOP (and hence of the QEP), and the subsequent commitment of staff to achieving institutional goals. The well-established structures across the University provide clearly articulated support in all areas, contributing to the ongoing development of academics as teachers. UWC is also showing leadership in the induction process for new staff. Work in this area has been guided by UWC's all-encompassing *Strategic Plan for Teaching and Learning*, and the associated Implementation Plan, which speaks to the status of teaching and learning, the professionalization of teaching staff, SOTL, e-pedagogies, infrastructural issues and graduate attributes. The ongoing involvement of the Director in national NRF-funded research projects has clearly also given considerable leadership to research associated with teaching and learning. Annual updates of the implementation plan link broader strategic goals and their objectives with faculties' own disciplinary areas and teaching and learning challenges. Ownership within the Faculty, not least by means of the Deputy Deans Teaching and Learning, and the Teaching and Learning specialists, is complemented by collaboration with the central Directorate for Teaching and Learning. Policy frameworks that outline core teaching and learning competencies required for academic staff have been developed and integrated into processes of decision making regarding academic staff selection, appointment, probation and promotion. All of these initiatives have contributed to elevating the status of teaching and learning at UWC, and to making teaching excellence part of the institutional fabric. The panel wishes to commend UWC for the excellent work being done.

The panel suggests that UWC consider developing a Continuous Professional Development framework for academic staff. This might assist in positioning the short-learning programmes and the Postgraduate Diploma as key components of staff development, while encouraging all academics to participate in professional development, regardless of their level of seniority.

UWC is urged to consider developing an institutional workload model, which should ideally take into account all expected components of academic life, including professional development. At the same time, institutional resource constraints would need to be kept in mind. The panel suggests that UWC consider ways to strengthen the current developmental appraisal system, to ensure that it is rolled out adequately in all departments and faculties and does lead to the continuous development of all academic staff. Should UWC not already

have an institutional policy on the developmental appraisal of academic staff to guide such processes, such a policy might be considered.

Focus Area 2: Enhancing Student Support and Development

UWC has been able to build on a lengthy history of work in this focus area, which was also specifically included in the IOP. Its commitment to holistic student development is underpinned by its *Charter of Graduate Attributes*, as well as by collaboration between teaching and learning and student support and development at DVC level and in both institutional and faculty committees. Well-established structures across the University provide clearly articulated support in all areas. A coherent approach creates a symbiotic relationship between teaching and learning and student support and development. An unusual feature of its committee structures, and one of the University's strengths, is the inclusion of student support staff on teaching and learning structures and vice versa.

The existence of various communication channels between the University and various student groups, ranging from students at course level up to the leadership of the Differently Able Student Association (DASA), enables the University to provide relevant support and development. Initiatives in this focus area, too, are underpinned by research (for instance, SASSE data), and in terms of UWC's interest in the scholarship of development, further issues of the *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa* have appeared.

While the many student support and development initiatives are commendable, the panel suggests that UWC consider developing an impact-monitoring measure of the various support activities, to ensure that limited resources are used effectively. Other monitoring and evaluation measures would help to identify and address instances where the implementation of student development initiatives in faculties is uneven, and also to obtain student feedback on the perceived benefit of interventions.

Further development of a universal system for monitoring students who do not attend class or manifest other academically risky behaviours is encouraged. Career and curriculum advising, not only at the beginning of first year but also at other times in students' academic careers, can help improve student retention.

UWC has invested substantially in its tutorial programme. The panel recommends that further attention be paid to tutor development.

Further development of on-line approaches to student support are recommended, as these will enhance flexibility in the provision of support to students.

Focus Area 3: Enhancing the Learning Environment

In terms of the reports and the interviews, CIECT and the Library have clearly contributed to further developments in this focus area; in these areas UWC is well in line with global trends and national imperatives, and is commended by the panel. CIECT is clearly a dynamic Centre, and is giving leadership to Faculties in taking forward e-learning. Their critical role

is to prepare and support students and lecturers for effective on-line engagement. This is done primarily through one-on-one support for staff members and through the large-scale Digital Academic Literacy programme for students. In keeping abreast of software developments, CIECT staff see themselves as research-led: research activities reflect the evidence of teaching, facilitation, assessment, moderation and design efforts.

The Library, too, has positioned itself as a partner in teaching and learning. Given the importance of information literacy for 21st Century graduates, a significant initiative has been preparation of Guidelines on embedding information literacy into teaching and learning at UWC. These Guidelines are now being workshopped, to familiarise staff, and first pilots are to take place in 2016.

The panel urges UWC to pay attention to the employment category, and conditions of service, of ‘professional staff’, for instance in the Library and CIECT, in order to recognise their considerable contributions to teaching and learning and to associated research at the institution.

Unfortunately, little information was available in either the final report or the interviews on improvements made to teaching and learning spaces, although the baseline report indicated that a number of building projects had been undertaken or were planned. The University is creating a bridge into the local community through purchasing a building in the nearby Bellville CBD. Renovations and refurbishments of some of the buildings on campus are taking place, and Wi-Fi provision has increased. The panel recommends that the university consider how to create numerous informal learning spaces for both individual students and groups of students spread throughout the campus. In some universities, wide passages and foyers are being used for this purpose, and outdoor learning spaces are also being created, including solar charging stations. It is helpful for students if there are food and drink kiosks close by.

Given that many of UWC’s students come from poor households, the provision of sufficient computers on campus is important. The panel suggests that the university explore implementing “thin client” (dumb terminals) in computer labs, which can reduce the maintenance and replacement costs.

Focus Area 4: Enhancing Course and Programme Enrolment

UWC has clearly paid considerable attention to course and programme enrolment management, in terms of both quality and access, and in seeking to ensure early identification and support for students at risk. The staff interviewed demonstrated enormous institutional will and commitment both to the students, in trying to make their lives better, and to working together in a collaborative way to bringing about improvements. These initiatives have been supported by the development of the University’s Student Enrolment Management System, which works from a single, integrated databases. It has enabled, among other things, nearly universal online registration.

From a university that relied on walk-ins to meet its enrolment targets a few years ago, UWC now readily meets its targets, as it has enhanced its reputation as an institution of choice for students seeking value for money (its fees are relatively low), good teaching and a caring university community. As a result, selection criteria are constantly being modified, based on research findings, with the goal of understanding the different categories of entering students and maximising both quality and access in the student intake. Entry requirements now focus more precisely on disciplines which are essential to success in the envisaged qualification. At the same time, some flexible curricula were introduced, to give students more leeway in the choice of major subjects. It was noted that the quality of the applicant pool has improved over the past few years.

UWC has a sound, research-based, approach to identifying gateway courses and there are a variety of interventions to address pass rates in these courses. Throughput rates have remained stable and above 80%; degree credit rates are monitored continuously, and there is regular discussion of throughput rates. Research in the Academic Planning Unit, and in the Faculties, is seeking to gain an in-depth understanding of reasons for student dropout, in part by means of interviews with successful students.

A Student Tracking System has been developed and an early alert system is being planned. The panel urges UWC to continue its work on the full implementation of the system at institutional level.

Concluding comment

The UWC plays an important, distinctive and academically focused role in providing quality higher education to historically marginalised students. UWC offers an excellent example to others on how to work effectively with very limited resources and overcome the challenging legacy of geographical location and spatial positioning. Despite its historical disadvantage, the University has become a vibrant, modern academic institution that combines a high academic standard with an honest response to its national mandate. The model of bottom-up development of the Institutional Operating Plan, followed by both institution level and faculty level implementation ensures both institutional coherence and faculty buy-in.

Despite the odds, UWC has managed to balance quality teaching and quality research while providing a caring environment for its students.

APPENDIX

Council on Higher Education (CHE) Visit – 07 March 2016 Schedule

	Focus Area			Time
1	Senior Management		DVC Academic and the Registrar	09:00 – 09:30
2	Key Role Players involved with Focus Area 1	ENHANCING ACADEMICS AS TEACHERS	Prof V Bozalek, Deputy Dean Teaching and Learning, Teaching and Learning Specialists	09:30 – 10:50
	Tea Break			10:50 – 11:00
3	Key role players involved with Focus Area 2	ENHANCING STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT	Dr P Dube DVC (SDS), Tania Overmayer, L Permall	11:00 – 11:50
4	Senior Management		Senior Management	12:00 – 13:00
	Lunch Break			13:00 – 13:30
5	Key role players involved in Focus Area 3	ENHANCING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	Dr J Stoltenkamp, Allison Fullard, Pateka Matshaya	13:30 – 14:20
6	Key role players involved in Focus Area 4	ENHANCING COURSE AND PROGRAMME ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT	Ms Nita Lawton-Misra – Registrar , Prof J Cornelissen Faculty Managers, Dr V. Brown and Mr V Morta	14:20 – 15:40
7	Senior Management		Prof Lawack – DVC (Academic)	15:40 – 16:00