

**Quality Enhancement Project**

**Institutional Reports: Phase 1**

**Due Date: January 2016**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of Institution** | Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University |
| **Contact Person** | Prof Cheryl Foxcroft |
| **Date of submission** | January 2016 |

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.

**Please note:** The report focuses on pivotal enhancements and challenges tackled in each of the 4 focus areas and will not repeat the range of activities and initiatives highlighted in NMMU’s 2014 QEP Phase 1 reflective report. In addition, some new initiatives are included which have been instituted in response to challenges raised in our 2014 report.

|  |
| --- |
| **1. INTRODUCTION (suggested length 2-5 pages)** |
| *Indicate how the report was prepared. Include a list of the people that were involved, their designations and their roles in the preparation of the report.*Line functionaries had responsibility to address aspects identified in NMMU’s QEP Phase 1 reflective report that fell in their area of responsibility. Key line functionaries were:* The office of the Dean: Teaching and Learning – Cheryl Foxcroft, Aileen Ownhouse and Jennifer Winstead.
* The Director and staff that head up key programmes in the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media – Dr Rita Kizito, Paul Harper, Dr Hermien Johannes, Dr Thoko Batyi, Anne-Mart Olsen, Eunice Champion, Ronelle Plaatjes, Liesl Smith, Shena Lamb-du Plessis and Shann Kieswetter (George campus).
* The Director and staff that head up key areas in the Student Counselling, Career and Development Centre – Dr Maud Ntanjana, Dr Ruth Connelly and Lungsi Ntlokwana.
* The Director of the Centre for Access Assessment and Research – Dave Jenkings.
* The Siyaphumelela project – headed up by the Director of Management Information, Dr Charles Sheppard, and Marian Neale-Shutte (institutional researcher).
* The Disability Unit – Dr Iona Wannenburg and Ruth Sauls.
* Student Affairs – Mr Mxolisi Ncapayi (Acting Dean of Students), Deidre Potgieter, Kim Elliott, Bev Willemse, Rob Minné, and Sister Goosen.
* Blended Learning Team in CTLM and ICT Services – Dr Sam Bosire, Steve Viljoen, Shawn Meyer, Koshala Terblanche, Thomas Hilmer, Dr Hermien Johannes, and Simon Goldstone.

At an institutional level, various institutional committees played a role in planning, operationalising and/or monitoring some of the quality enhancement initiatives that have been focused on at NMMU in 2015. These committees included:* Admissions Committee, chaired by the Dean: Teaching & Learning, Prof Cheryl Foxcroft, with representatives from Senate; Admissions; the Registrar’s division; the Centre for Access Assessment and Research; Student Counselling, Career and Development Centre; Disability Unit; Marketing and Corporate Relations; and the SRC.
* Blended Learning Committee, chaired by the Dean: Teaching & Learning with representatives from each faculty; the George campus; ICT Services, CIO, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media; the Blended Learning Team; Library and Information Services; and the SRC.
* Co-curricular Student Development Committee, chaired by the Dean: Teaching & Learning, with representatives from Senate; Student Counselling, Career and Development Centre; Disability Unit; Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media; Student Governance and Development; Student Housing; the Co-curricular Record project; the International Office; and the SRC.
* NMMU Teaching and Learning Committee, chaired by Prof Denise Zinn, DVC: Teaching & Learning.
* Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees chaired by: Dr Jacqui Lück (Arts), Prof Amanda Singleton (Business and Economic Sciences), Karen Church (Engineering, the Built Environment and Information Technology), Dr Kathija Adam (Education), Dr Suzette du Rand (Health Sciences), Lynn Biggs (Law), and Prof Charmain Cilliers (Science).
* Student Orientation Committee – chaired by the Dean: Teaching & Learning, and includes representatives from the 7 faculties; George campus; Admissions; Student Housing; Student Governance and Development; Library and Information Services; Student Counselling, Career and Development Centre; Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media, Co-curricular Record Project; Disability Unit; Campus Health; Student Financial Aid, Registration; the International Office; Marketing and Corporate Relations; and the SRC.

NMMU’s 2015 QEP report was compiled by the Dean: Teaching & Learning following input from relevant line functionaries and from committee minutes and documentation.A draft of NMMU’s 2015 QEP report was submitted to key line functionaries, the Executive Deans and Campus Principals. Based on input received, refinements were made. The report was finalised and signed off by the DVC: Teaching and Learning, Prof Denise Zinn. |

|  |
| --- |
| **2. FOCUS AREA 1: ENHANCING ACADEMICS AS TEACHERS (suggested length 10-20 pages)*****Includes: professional development, reward and recognition, workload, conditions of service and performance appraisal which will be integrated into the sub-sections below.*** |
| **2.1 Summary of what the university considers as the key issues in enhancing academics as teachers.**At the outset, we would like to have noted that there has been a change in the overall leadership in this portfolio, with the appointment of a new DVC:T&L since December 2014. This has been accompanied by a shift in emphasis, and a prioritisation of the Teaching and Learning portfolio, that are marked by some significant changes since our initial 2014 submission. In brief, these relate to the closer alignment of T&L with the overall Vision and Mission of the Insitution, our teaching and learning philosophy, values and desired graduate attributes, our transformation objectives and the exploration and implementation of a humanising pedagogy, that are all part of our strategic goals at NMMU. There is a tangible recognition that to achieve these goals will require deliberative effort and intervention, and this informs how we take forward the quality enhancement project. This will be further elaborated upon in section 2.2.1, and wherever relevant in the rest of the report.In our QEP reflection[[1]](#footnote-1) submitted in 2014, it was noted that the **key enablers** of enhancing both academics as teachers and the status of teaching at NMMU are:* Availability of a range of teaching and learning development activities, programmes and opportunities, which increasing numbers of staff are taking up.
* Attention is given to orientating, inducting, mentoring and developing new academics and professional staff.
* Availability of Teaching Development and Innovation Funding (TDIF), which is increasing the number of innovative Teaching and Learning projects.
* Increased adoption of blended learning which serves as a catalyst for teaching innovation.
* Emergence of an enlivening teaching and learning culture in a number of departments and faculties.

It was further noted that the **key challenges (as identified in 2014)** of enhancing both academics as teachers and the status of teaching at NMMU are:* High student : staff ratios
* Scheduling, attendance and focus of teaching development programmes (e.g., SoTLC)
* Workload model needs refinement
* Enhancing the status and importance of SoTL
* Enhancing the adoption of a blended learning approach
* Revising aspects of the Teaching and Learning Excellence Awards
* Revisiting the support provided by the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media (CTLM) and the status of teaching and learning development staff

NOTE: We are now also taking into account the critical need for ‘Re-Imaging’ and ‘Re-Imagining’ teaching and learning in the academy, as it has for too long been relegated to a position secondary to Research, a relegation that has been supported by structures, incentives and rewards not only in our institution, but also in the broader higher education sector.**2.2 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?****2.2.1 Re-positioning Teaching and Learning**Something that was not envisaged in our 2014 QEP report was that the re-positioning of teaching and learning would emerge as a focal point in 2015. In a sense, this has started a process of “positive restlessness” in that a “business as usual” approach to teaching and learning is no longer acceptable and not in the best interests of student learning and success. Why this is being raised at the outset of our 2015 report is that the grappling that has begun in terms of re-positioning teaching and learning has particularly influenced what we tackled in 2015 in terms of enhancing the status of teaching and academics as teachers. Consequently, attention is given below to some pertinent aspects that have ignited the process to re-position teaching and learning at NMMU.At an institutional level, the position of “Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic” was renamed “Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning”. The significance attached to this renaming was that it sharpened the focus of the position more prominently in terms of teaching and learning.Prof Denise Zinn took up the position of DVC Teaching and Learning since the end of 2014 and has consistently focused on re-positioning teaching and learning. Examples of this can be *inter alia* found in her addresses to Senate, the NMMU Teaching and Learning Committee, and in her inputs in the mid-level leadership programme which forms part of NMMU’s Institutional Culture Enlivening project. One of the drivers of the re-positioning of teaching and learning has been to re-focus teaching and learning as a SEARCH (as a precursor to or critical driver of RE-SEARCH) where the six letters could stand for (amongst several others) as: S – Student-centredE – EnablingA – Academic ProjectR – Reflexive Practice/PraxisC - Curriculum and CuriosityH – Humanising PedagogiesA *Teaching and Learning Focussed Retreat* was held on 8 and 9 September 2015. Academics from across all the faculties and campuses, teaching development staff and students participated in the retreat. The primary aim was for staff and students to listen to each other’s experiences and ideas, and to lay the groundwork for re-positioning teaching and learning at NMMU to represent its greater significance and role in the academic project. Among the outcomes of the breakaway was that:* A new Teaching and Learning Plan would need to be developed in a participatory way, which will be done in 2016.
* A series of campus-wide conversations and difficult dialogues will be held in 2016 on key teaching and learning matters such as assessment, multilingualism, humanising pedagogy, SoTL, and so on. The *#feesmustfall* protests added *decolonisation of the curriculum* and *the role of the student voice* as further topics for dialogues.
* Governance and committee structures related to teaching and learning need to be reviewed and the work of the institutional and faculty teaching and learning committees in particular needs re-imagining and their composition revisited to become *inter alia* more inclusive.
* There needs to be an intensified focus on re-imagining assessment, which can feed into the *Assessment Policy* development.
* The work of the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media (CTLM) needs to be aligned to the work of Faculties, together with other structures that support and develop teaching and learning such as faculty teaching and learning committees, and these have to be revisited, reimagined and repositioned where necessary.

**2.2.2 Re-imagining and Re-positioning the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media (CTLM)**A process has been underway to review, re-imagine and re-position the work of CTLM within NMMU’s academic project. The outcomes of this to date are:* A new purpose statement/desired future state has been crafted. This will need to be shared with teaching and learning partners in faculties.
* Key programme areas to deliver to this future state are in place, but some (e.g., curriculum development) require more expertise to be built and staff resources to be added.
* While there is a desire to work in multi-functional teams across CTLM’s programmes and in collaboration with academics, this is proving to be a challenge. Some mechanisms are being put in place for 2016 in an attempt to encourage more teamwork in CTLM.
* To factor the voice of academics in more strongly, a *Lecturer Learning Needs Survey* was conducted in 2015. Seventy-two academics responded. Academics from all the faculties and across all the academic ranks were represented. Clear preference was indicated for certain teaching development topics over others, and there does not seem to be much of an appetite for a PG Diploma in HE Teaching Practices. In terms of when and how teaching development opportunities should be offered there was a range of responses from individual/group “just for you/us” consultations in departments, to lunch-hour or 1-hour sessions, to half-day workshops (some of which could be offered in the recess) and online learning opportunities. Academics are thus looking for flexibility in terms of when and how teaching development opportunities are offered.
* Of interest in the responses to this survey was the fact that while 55% of the academics indicated that focusing on applying a humanising pedagogical approach was important to very important, 14.5% indicated that this was an unimportant topic. Adopting a humanising pedagogical approach at NMMU is key to moving to a more appropriate pedagogy that will be more inclusive of diverse student voices and learning styles but also develop a critical consciousness in our students. The results of the survey suggest that there is an uneven interest in developing a greater understanding of a humanising pedagogy. The challenge for 2016 will be to develop strategies to challenge mindsets and engage in activities and debates to develop personal and shared understandings of what a humanising pedagogy is.
* A proposal has been developed to form a Blended Learning Academy as academics have clearly indicated that they require more ‘just-in-time’ and ‘just-for-you’ support and development when it comes to using technology to enhance learning and facilitating blended learning effectively. However, as blended learning straddles both teaching and learning and ICT Services there are divergent views on the support side of the university whether there is a need for such an academy, where it should be housed, and whether it could include both staff that have a strong teaching and learning background and ICT engineers.

On the 25th of November 2015 a further CTLM strategic planning session was convened. The key priorities developed during the workshop *inter alia* related to the positioning of CTLM to effect greater impact and collaboration within CTLM, across HEADS and with faculties and other support structures (e.g., the Quality Advancement Unit). This will be discussed further at a Teaching and Learning Breakaway in early 2016 to reach institutional consensus about CTLM’s, role, functions and programmes and how to foster appropriate levels of collaboration with academics, students and other HEADS centres as well as the other structures necessary to support and advance teaching and learning and teaching development. **2.2.3 Recognising and Rewarding Teaching and Learning Excellence**NMMU has had teaching and learning excellence awards in place at an institutional and a faculty level since its inception. The current awards are as follows:* Faculty level – Faculty Emerging Excellent Teacher and Faculty Excellent Teacher.
* Institutional level – NMMU Excellent Teacher, NMMU Teaching and Learning Excellence: Team Award, and the Distinguished Teacher Award, which is the most prestigious award.

However, as reflected in our 2014 QEP report, academics identified that aspects related to the criteria and procedures of the excellence awards needed reviewing. In November 2014, the NMMU Teaching and Learning Committee undertook a brainstorming activity and identified the following as needing refinement and rethinking:* Review of the criteria especially in terms of the number of criteria (6) as well as to align the criteria with other NMMU policies (e.g. Ad Personam Promotions, and the Framework for the Recognition of Excellence) and benchmark the criteria and processes followed to determine recipients against the HELTASA excellence awards criteria and processes.
* Institute a nomination process while retaining the right of individuals to nominate themselves.
* Streamline the content of the portfolios of evidence provided.
* Place greater emphasis on peer and student reviews.
* Consider for which awards national and international teaching and learning recognition are needed.
* Interview candidates for faculty and institutional awards.
* Consider introducing new awards.
* Showcase awardees more as this authenticates the awardee and encourages other to strive for excellence and apply.

In view of the above, the following aspects were focused on in 2015:* Past recipients of institutional teaching and learning awards have been invited to engage with new academics participating in the teaching and learning induction programme and in some of the topics of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Certificate (SoTLC). This has given them the opportunity to both showcase their work and to pass on some of the teaching and learning facilitation insights that they have gained to others.
* The *NMMU Teaching and Learning Excellence Awards Policy* was substantially revised following inputs from the NMMU and Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees. Among the revisions are:
	+ Collapsing the previous 6 criteria into 3 criteria.
	+ While applications are still needed from individuals or teams, faculties are tasked with earmarking staff that they can encourage to apply for awards.
	+ While the basis of the application is still a teaching portfolio, it will be streamlined and be more integrative in nature. In addition, applicants will be invited to make a presentation and be interviewed by an awards panel.
	+ New awards have been included at an institutional level (e.g., an emerging excellent teacher, awards in a particular focus area, and a career/lifetime achievement award).
* The revised *Teaching and Learning Excellence Awards Policy* is in final draft form and will serve at Faculty Boards, the Executive Committee of Senate and the Senate in the first semester of the 2016 academic year.
* While the revised policy will only come into effect in 2017, for the 2016 awards, applicants will be invited to make a short presentation and be interviewed by the awards panel (as the current policy made provision for this but it wasn’t enforced) and the teaching portfolio submitted will be more streamlined and integrated.

**2.2.4 Workload model**During 2015, under the leadership of Prof Eugen Straueli the workload model was discussed with each faculty[[2]](#footnote-2), refinements were made where necessary, and software linked to ITS was developed so that the workload model can be completed online. It will be used in 2016 and refinements will be made based on feedback received.**2.2.5 Performance appraisal**The Framework for the Recognition of Excellence (FRE) is a performance management system that NMMU continued to pilot and refine in 2015 to appraise and reward excellent performance. While NMMU encourages academics to engage in opportunities to develop their teaching practice, it is not compulsory to do so. The implementation of the FRE system is thus a potentially promising development to foster more widespread uptake of teaching development opportunities and to explore criteria and ways of rewarding teaching excellence consistently. During 2015 faculties developed benchmarks for the teaching, research, engagement and administrative functions of the different categories of academics. In most faculties, engaging in teaching development has been included in the rubrics that have been developed to evaluate teaching activities and practices. While the FRE system still needs refining and the possibility of employing it in 3-year cycles for academics will be explored in 2016, its implementation is being closely monitored. It is too early to quantify what its impact on teaching and learning excellence and student success will be.**2.3 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.**Although some of the aspects covered in section 2.2 are potentially developing into promising practices (e.g., how teaching and learning and the support of teaching development are being re-positioned and re-imagined), but these will not be repeated in this section. Instead two other initiatives will be highlighted, namely, funding for teaching development and innovation, and growth in blended learning.**2.3.1 Teaching Development and Innovation Fund (TDIF)** Through one of the projects linked to the Teaching Development Grant, funding is made available to NMMU academic and PASS staff members for:a. Teacher development projects. b. Innovative teaching and learning projects. A framework for funding innovative teaching and learning (TDIF) projects was approved by Senate in 2012. To be considered for funding an application must be made. The basis of the application is a project plan (including a budget) which should give the review panel sufficient information to decide whether the project is feasible and will make a contribution to the teaching development and innovation at NMMU. Applications have grown substantially each year as have the number of projects that funding was awarded to. In 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively, 15, 25 and 35 teaching development and innovation projects were funded. In 2015, the funding awarded to the projects amounted to R1,210,170.The topics covered in the projects vary and include:* Programme, curriculum and module development, which often involve tapping into the expertise of national and international discipline experts.
* Experiential learning, often with an engagement focus.
* Blended learning especially in terms of developing learning sites with e-tivities, formative assessment exercises, visual/digital content, e-tutoring and e-support, and summative e-assessment as well as alternative forms of assessment (e.g., videos).
* Language-related initiatives linked to enhancing English proficiency and multilingualism (especially with an electronic focus) as well as writing development and support.
* Tracking student success and developing supportive interventions through mentoring, tutoring and academic development initiatives (for both students who are struggling and for high achievers).

Each project is headed up by a project leader. Multi-disciplinary support is provided, where staff members from Higher Education Access and Development Services (HEADS), ICT Services, Student Affairs and Library and Information Services are often linked to a project team to provide expert input. Two of the **key enablers** of successful projects identified are the motivation and commitment of project leaders and teams who take ownership for the project and its success, as well as the availability of senior students to act as assistants, tutors, researchers, and so on. The other key enabler is the availability of funding via the Teaching Development Grant.The projects can be funded for three years and most of them are still in this 3-year cycle. As a result, there is only partial evidence of impact so far. Some of the outcomes of the projects which provide some evidence of impact and dissemination beyond the projects themselves include:* Presenting and show-casing TDIF projects at NMMU events such as teaching and learning breakaways, faculty teaching and learning committees, etc. For example, 3 of the projects related to tracking student progress in various departments were presented at the formal launch of the Kresge-funded Siyaphumelela project. The work done in these TDIF projects formed part of the basis for the institution-wide student tracking system that will be developed in the Siyaphumelela project (see section 5.2.1).
* Innovations and evidence gathered in some TDIF projects have been submitted as part of evidence for accreditation purposes for various programmes.
* Teaching and learning aids and materials have been developed. These include videos (covering key concepts and experiments), learning materials and exercises (some electronic); and e-assessments.
* At least one short learning programme has been developed to train Library and Information Services’ staff in learning facilitation to enhance the delivery of the training courses they offer.
* Curricula have been redesigned for an entire department, new modules developed and the way in which learning is designed and facilitated in at least two modules has been re-imagined.
* International collaborations have developed in 3 projects.
* Academic development interventions (e.g., student advising, and mentorship programmes in the School of Engineering and Student Housing), have contributed to increased rates of student success.
* Experiential learning provided to students in at least one project has resulted in more students getting placement in a large accounting firm as trainee accountants.
* One of the drivers of the TDIF funding is to grow the number of SoTL-related outputs. For 2015, the outputs were:
	+ 1 refereed subsidy generating journal publication
	+ 5 papers published in subsidised conference proceedings
	+ 1 manuscript submitted to journal
	+ 2 internal research reports
	+ 3 papers presented at international conferences and 2 at local conferences
* Recipients of TDIF funding have won various excellence awards at NMMU – in 2015 2 won T&L Excellence awards and one an engagement excellence award. These recipients have indicated that the TDIF projects enhanced their profiles and could have contributed to their achieving the award.

 **2.3.2 Blended learning**The following vision statements underpin Blended Learning initiatives, strategic- and action plans towards sustainable blended learning at NMMU: • The use of technology should be a normal part of mainstream teaching and learning provision, processes and practices.• To create a collaborative learning environment that flexibly blends face-to-face and technology-mediated learning opportunities to enhance learning and prepare NMMU learners for life and work in the 21st century (NMMU’s vision for Blended Learning).Significant progress has been made in implementing and up-scaling blended learning at NMMU. Evidence of progress made includes:1. **Enabling environment and technology adoption**

Available teaching development spaces and opportunities and training for academics at different levels of technology adoption contributed to creating enabling environments, collaboration, engagement and commitment to effecting change towards technology adoption, utilising of Blended Learning platforms, technologies, tools and resources, as well as changing teaching practices. Evidence of this includes:* Four Moodle server instances are available to enable environments for teaching and learning (*iLearn*), assessment (*assess*), engagement (*engage*) and research (*Incoko*).
* Academic modules are hosted on iLearn and module SharePoint sites. The growth in number of module sites on iLearn increased by 227% from March 2012 (number of sites 508) to October 2014 (1 661 sites). Growth in the number of activities on Learn was 198% from April 2012 (715 017) to April 2014 (2 130 038). Activities logged from1 March 2014 for all participants increased from a total of 1 125 719 to a total of 1 495 190 on 1 March 2015.
* e-Assessment is gaining momentum and a dedicated assessment server has been set-up. A number of research projects are piloting the field at NMMU. e-Assessment has been prioritised as a core focus for the Blended Learning Team.
* *Engage* at NMMU is a server for Blended Learning engagement activities. Although it is in a developmental stage, it already hosts a number of sites for communities of practice, schools, inter-institutional collaborative research and DHET funded projects.
* *Incoko*, initiated by the NMMU Business School, hosts 85 modules, designed to be fit for purpose to accommodate post-graduate research processes and procedures for staff and students. Growth in number of activities increased from 4 to 806. The Business School bought into this and training is compulsory. Since the beginning of 2015, five customised training sessions involving 21 academics, took place. 510 users are registered on *Incoko*.
* ICT Services provide the servers, backup, Wi-Fi, networks, Helpdesk and needs driven one-on-one support.
1. **Technologies, training and support**

Various technologies and tools are available to support teaching development. Training sessions are being offered on a regular basis. Enthusiastic participants are using tools such as Respondus, Camtasia and Turnitin innovatively. The NMMUtube similar to YouTube provides video streaming support on the internal network.Although technology is so entrenched in our everyday lives that it takes time and effort to master what we think of as useful in our teaching and learning environments, and hence training ‘just in time’, ‘just for you' becomes imperative. To accommodate not only demands but also pro-active preparation and training, special needs, and innovative approaches, training and development programmes and offerings are designed to be flexible, humanising, non-prescriptive, customisable and ‘thinking out-of-the box’ applications. On the other hand training programmes and presentations are scalable to accommodate large groups and faculty specific requests. Offerings range from formal to informal blended learning presentations, sessions and hands-on workshops and skills training. Aspects covered in the training include online assessment; facilitating online teaching and learning; training for Moodle, Turnitin, Camtasia and Respondus to groups, departments and faculties; using resources in blended learning; mobile learning; online communication; and managing online and blended environments.The *Blended Learning Gateway* on the Staff Portal provides spaces for self-directed learning and online help.1. **Key Drivers and Enablers**

Key drivers for blended learning at NMMU include funding opportunities (such as applying for TDIF funding as outlined in 2.3.1); inclusion of blended learning in strategic plans and priorities; staff and student needs, demands and skills; e-assessment requirements; and stakeholder demands. Key enablers ensure that blended learning is sustained. At NMMU enablers that support staff and assist in managing the change process include the multi-disciplinary Blended Learning Team comprised of staff from the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media and staff from ICT Services, an institution-wide Blended Learning Committee chaired by the Dean: Teaching and Learning, the development of research initiatives and opportunities (e.g., in 2015, 4 papers were presented at international conferences and one paper on e-assessment was published in a subsidy-generating journal); and e-assessment and technology support, platforms, tools and technologies. An area that requires research is to evaluate the impact that blended and online learning has on student success and the student experience. While some research in this regard has been done in some departments and faculties, an institution-wide study has not yet been conducted. Such a study will need to use a mixed methods approach where both quantitative and qualitative data are gathered and analysed. Collecting digital artefacts and stories from students, lecturers and staff that support and drive NMMU’s blended learning project will add other dimensions to information from survey questionnaires and interviews.1. **Key challenges:**

While continuing to grow blended learning, attention needs to be given to more widespread adoption of open educational resources and especially free e-textbooks, and developing fully online modules and MOOCs so that NMMU can engage in providing more open learning opportunities to enhance access and accessibility to university studies, especially to adult learners. Historically, at key moments in the blended/online/open learning journey to date, the structure(s) responsible for online and blended learning changed. We currently face the next key moment on our journey as we cannot both sustain the development of blended and online learning/open education and foster continued innovation, evolution and expansion at NMMU with our current structures and human resources. Hence, the need to rethink what structure(s)/entity(ies) will serve us best in the next phase, what the keys tasks of such an entity will be, and what the best mix of staff (and students) is to support and grow blended and open learning at NMMU.**2.4 Identify the main challenges the university still faces in relation to this focus area.**Among the key challenges related to enhancing academics as teachers that NMMU continues to grapple with are:* The realisation that we need to align T&L to the overall vision and mission, philosophy, values and desired graduate attributes of NMMU, our transformation goals, and the embracing of a humanising pedagogy across the institution, all of which will require deliberative effort and intervention.
* The need to provide a re-imaging and re-imagining of teaching and learning in the Academy
* How to involve more senior academics in Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees, as well as how to include the student voice more meaningfully in such committees.
* Enhancing the status of teaching and learning practice. In this regard, urgent attention needs to be given to implementing the *Multiple Career Pathways Policy* as well as to refining the teaching rubrics that form part of the FRE system*.*
* Motivating all academics to become excited about and committed to developing their teaching practice and to develop a common understanding of a humanising pedagogy. It is possible that the FRE system could be used to foster such motivation and understanding.
* Raising awareness about the purpose of assessment and methods that will enhance student learning.
* Raising awareness of the importance of understanding the factors that make face to face learning and technology enhanced learning successful on their own, and then when combined.
* Improving multi-stakeholder collaboration to more effectively support and advance blended learning at NMMU
* Building capacity and effective support resources related to curriculum development and transformation.
* Identifying a systematic way of using CTLM resources to effectively contribute to systemic change to teaching, learning and assessment practices at NMMU.
* Becoming more intentional related to researching and gathering evidence related to the impact of teaching and learning initiatives - this includes building capacity to conduct such research and to use available data to guide teaching and curriculum development (e.g., using data and information generated in the Siyaphumelela and SASSE projects).
 |

|  |
| --- |
| **3. FOCUS AREA 2: ENHANCING STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT (suggested length 10-20 pages)*****Includes: career and curriculum advising, life and academic skills development, counselling[[3]](#footnote-3), student performance monitoring and referral2.***This section of the report should make reference to all of the sub-topics listed above, either by discussing them individually or by integrating them. Note: it is not necessary to respond to each of the questions below for every sub-topic. |
| **3.1 Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in enhancing student support and development.**In our QEP reflection[[4]](#footnote-4) submitted in 2014, it was noted that among the **key enabling factors** of enhancing student support and development were:* Availability of a range of enhancement and development opportunities (e.g., programmes and services offered in Student Counselling, the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media, Student Housing and Student Governance and Development).
* A culture of peer assisted learning, which provides students with small group learning experiences.
* Online and other resources (e.g., study guides) to support student learning and development.
* A growing culture of co-curricular involvement of students.
* Availability of data from CAAR assessments, LEC, SASSE, the Student Experience Survey, etc. that provide a profile of our students which can inform the learning enhancement and development activities that we should have in place as well as to provide impact evidence.

It was further noted that among the key challenges that need to be urgently addressed regarding enhancing student support and development were:* Intensify the focus on first year success
* Revisit the voluntary nature of most of the student development and support initiatives
* Find ways to improve class attendance
* Integrating and embedding academic literacies and graduate attributes in modules/ programmes
* Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) and multilingualism

**3.2 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 student support and development, and (d) what promising practices are emerging?****3.2.1 Intensifying the Focus on First-Year Success**When reviewing some of the data analytics for 2014 it was noted that the success rate of first-time entering students was 76.3% which is two percentage points lower than the overall 2014 undergraduate success rate of 78.2%. The retention rate of first-time entering students is above 80%, but is lower for diploma students and higher for students in extended and degree programmes. As a consequence, while a number of development and enhancement opportunities, activities and programmes are provided to NMMU students, it was reflected in NMMU’s Quality Enhancement report that more needs to be done to enhance student transition and the success of first-time entering students. The following recommendation was made:*A comprehensive strategy for first-year student success needs to be developed and resourced, given the problems students face with the transition to HE and lack of career guidance and DHET imperatives to increase access. Some of the activities and initiatives already on offer at NMMU could be re-packaged and coordinated under this strategy, but this will require additional resourcing. In addition, this will require focused teaching development initiatives for lecturers teaching first-year modules.*The Student Orientation Committee, under the leadership of the Dean: Teaching and Learning, thus instituted a process in 2015 to review the current Orientation programme for new first-years, to explore the notion of a first-year experience (FYE) programme and to conceptualise such a programme for NMMU. The process that unfolded included:1. **Engaging two external consultants to review the orientation programme** – one through the lens of how the orientation programme might be expanded to a FYE programme and the other through the lens of whether an inclusive approach was adopted to cater for our diverse range of students. While noting some of the good practices in place, these reviewers also provided a range of suggestions to enhance the orientation programme and to more intentionally link orientation and the other support and development activities available so that a more coherent transition programme for first-years could be created. Among the suggestions already picked up on for the refined 2016 orientation programme was to:
	* Focus more on small group, active and engaged learning opportunities with Buddies (senior students) rather than having many large group activities where students are often passive for much of the time.
	* Revisit the content of the programme to ensure that only the essential content was included to avoid content overload.
2. **Surveying the range of orientation and transition activities** offered in departments, Student Affairs, the centres in the Higher Education Access and Development Services (HEADS) division, and by the Library and Information Services. The information obtained was thematically analysed and compiled in a document circulated *inter alia* to academic departments, the NMMU and faculty teaching and learning committees, and the Student Orientation Committee members. Everyone who received the document was encouraged to share it widely as they could identify good ideas that they could implement. Among the themes identified to activities prior to the start of classes were:
* Activities prior to students entering university
* Institutional and faculty welcome and institution-wide orientation programme
* Discipline/Department-specific orientation
* Social integration

The following themes were identified related to transition and student success activities that take place throughout the first year of study:* Small-group peer-facilitated learning
* Collaboration between first-year and senior students
* Gathering information, monitoring academic progress, inspiring lectures, formative assessment preparation, class size, class representatives
* Personal, career and learning development and student wellness – in terms of activities in departments and student success enhancement services and programme in divisions and units such as Student Counselling, the Centre for Teaching learning and Media, Student Housing, Campus Health, and Student Governance and Development.
* Co-curricular activities (including social and cultural integration)
* Online initiatives and support and the use of social media.
* Leadership development and community engagement
1. **Developing and approving a Concept Document for a First-Year Success (FYS) programme.** A concept document was developed and approved by the NMMU Student Orientation and Teaching and Learning Committees. As will be outlined briefly below in extracts from the concept document, the current pre-entry and orientation initiatives together with intentionally-focused student development and success initiatives in- and out-of-class will form part of a comprehensive first-year experience (FYE) programme called the First-Year Success (FYS) programme.

*The* ***main purpose*** *of the multidimensional FYS programme is to facilitate the holistic development of first-time entering students that enables their successful transition and integration into NMMU.**To achieve the purpose of the FYS programme, all activities and initiatives that form part of the programme, are underpinned by a set of principles. These principles apply to NMMU students as well as academic and PASS staff engaged in the FYS programme. The* ***underpinning FYS principles*** *to enable individual development and that of others are:**a. Taking responsibility and being accountable**b. Attaining a sense of belonging to the NMMU community/communities**c. Being open to personal growth and purpose development**d. Contributing to dynamic learning opportunities**e. Navigating my learning**The following outcomes have been identified:**1. All new first-years access the learning and development opportunities linked to FYS, with specific attention given to the special needs of sub-groups (e.g., students with disabilities, international students, rural students, adult learners, and high achieving students).* *2. New students develop an understanding of the purpose of higher education and NMMU’s vision, mission and values.**3. Successful transition of new first-year students into NMMU.**4. Integration of new students into the intellectual, cultural and social fabric of NMMU.**5. New students develop an understanding of what is expected of them, that they need to take co-responsibility for their learning and holistic development, and the literacies that are needed to be successful in their studies and life.**6. New students are familiarised with the programmes, services and facilities available to support and enhance their learning and development.**7. Academics, PASS staff, and peer learning facilitators understand their roles and co-responsibilities in facilitating the transition, integration and holistic development of first-year students.**8. Through participating in the FYS Virtual Academy academics, PASS staff and peer learning facilitators develop their teaching and facilitation practices to enhance the learning experiences of students.**To ensure the coherence of the multidimensional FYS programme:**a. A map should be compiled each year of the various activities and initiatives as a guide for:** *Students to be aware of the range and sequencing of the diverse learning and development opportunities*
* *For academics and PASS staff to synergistically align their activities to enhance the intentionality of their offerings*

*b. A “big question/statement” should be determined annually that:** *Students are expected to respond to throughout the course of their first-year so that they can intentionally connect their learning to a common question/statement. Their response will culminate in an output (e.g., poster, portfolio, etc.).*
* *Academics, PASS staff and peer learning facilitators can alert students to how they might link relevant learning and experiences in- and out-of-class to the question/statement.*

*c. All academics, PASS staff and peer learning facilitators who are integrally involved in facilitating learning for first-year students will be part of the FYS-VA. This will enhance communication among the different role players, provide a platform for sharing and developing good teaching and facilitation practices and data analytics related to first-years, and provide online information and learning opportunities related to research, student and learning development theories and good practices related to successful student transition and holistic development.*As one of the phases of our FYS programme, the revamped Orientation programme (How2@nmmu) will be implemented from the Welcome ceremony (23 January 2016) through to the latter part of February 2016. As far as the other phases of the FYS programme are concerned, we will be piloting certain aspects in 2016. Among these are:1. We are in the process of creating a FYS webpage. The webpage will include aspects such as information about FYS, links to online resources, blogs around the Big Statement and Big Questions (see point 4 below), links to NMMU events that could aid the unpacking of the Big Statement, etc. Additionally, a FYS Facebook page has been created (NMMU First Year Success Programme (FYS)) alongside two twitter accounts (#new2NMMU and NMMUFYS) to link first-year students with advice from senior students, academics, PASS staff and peer learning facilitators.2. Intentionally focusing on key aspects at critical moments during the first year – in and out of class. 3. Initiating a community of practice related to enhancing student success in the first year. To this end, we will pilot the creation of the FYS-VA. All academics that teach first year modules in 2016 along with HEADS and Student Affairs staff and also peer learning facilitators (e.g., tutors, mentors, SI leaders, teaching assistants, etc.) that work with first years will be invited to form part of the FYS-VA. While much of the work of the FYS-VA will be via online collaboration, there could also be some face to face activities to share practices and challenges and get inputs from expert visitors to NMMU, webinars, etc. 4. Big statement and Big Questions: Students will be expected to respond to the big statement and questions throughout the course of their first-year so that they can intentionally connect their learning to this common question/statement. Their response will culminate in an output (e.g., poster, portfolio, etc.), which could be presented at a FYS Summit at the end of the year. **Big Statement for 2016:** Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world (Nelson Mandela, *Address at the Planetarium, Johannesburg, South Africa, 16 July 2003*).Some potential **Big Questions** that could help students to grapple with the meaning of Mandela’s Big Statement are:• What aspects of the world should change? Why?• What was the context in which Mandela said these words? How might this add to the meaning of what he said? Can his words apply equally well in the context of NMMU, South Africa and the world in 2016? • What is “education” and what makes it so powerful? How do we make sure that education really does change the world? What aspects of education need to change to make its role in society more powerful? • What are you doing as a first-year NMMU student that leads to the powerful change role of education being achieved?• How does education link with the development of values? How have your values being impacted on by being a first-year NMMU student?• What other questions pop into your mind linked to what Mandela said about education and change?We’ve developed funky posters with this statement and reflective prompts as well as bookmarks and “button badges” have been made which contain the Big Statement. The badges and bookmarks will be given to first-years, lecturers, peer learning facilitators, HEADS and Student Affairs staff, etc. The posters, bookmarks and “button badges” will be used to help to remind students and staff to grapple with the Big Statement throughout the year, to blog about their meaning-making, etc.Given that we have already stretched our resources to the limits to pilot aspects of the FYS programme in 2016, we have not built in a formal evaluation of the impact of the programme in 2016. Instead, we will:* Constantly interact with Buddy groups[[5]](#footnote-5), Buddies, other peer facilitators, as well as academics and PASS staff to get feedback about the aspects of FYS that we are implementing and also to get them to help us shape the rest of the programme that will be implemented in 2017.
* Gather feedback and comments from first-years regarding how they experienced the aspects of FYS that we implemented.
* Gather feedback from PASS staff involved with specialised first-year co-curricular activities regarding how they perceived the relevance of the aspects of FYS that we implemented.
* Gather feedback and comments from lecturers of first-year modules regarding how they perceived the relevance of the aspects of FYS that we implemented.
* Develop a more comprehensive research protocol to research the impact of FYS from 2017 onwards and obtain ethics clearance during 2016.

**3.2.2 Language of Learning and Teaching and Multilingualism**In our QEP reflection[[6]](#footnote-6) submitted in 2014, it was noted that:* As *language is a barrier to learning, the revision of the Language Policy is an urgent matter as this will direct the strategies that need to be developed to implement it.*
* *Piloting the use of multilingualism in facilitating learning across a range of modules and disciplines needs to be intensified and researched*
* *The use of educational technology to enable multilingualism and access for students with disabilities needs to be explored (e.g., subtitles in different languages in a video).*

During 2015 the DVC Teaching and Learning held a range of meetings and led a discussion in a Senate meeting to explore:* what informed the development of the current NMMU Language Policy;
* what the barriers were to its implementation; and
* what refinements were needed to the policy.

In addition to these discussions that will guide the policy refinement in 2016, stock was also taken of a range of multilingualism initiatives that are being piloted and researched. The outcomes of these pilots provide concrete examples of how multilingualism could be implemented, the value of adopting a multilingual approach, and the impact on student success and their perception of their learning experience. Some of these pilot projects were presented at a national conference on multilingualism held at UNISA in August and at a mini-conference held at NMMU on 12 November 2015. Some of the pilot projects will be highlighted below as they provide insights into potential enablers that can assist in expanding the adoption of a multilingual approach at NMMU. 1. **Development of isiXhosa speaking students’ academic literacies: a multilingual intervention** (Dr Thoko Batyi – doctoral study completed in 2014)

Multilingual teaching and learning strategies were tested in a Tourism Communication tutorial with isiXhosa-speaking students. Based on the theory of “multiliteracies” (The New London Group, Cope & Kalantzis, 1996), this research was conducted to investigate the usefulness in teaching and learning of strategies, such as, the development and use of multilingual glossaries, code meshing, translanguaging and reading bilingually. Data was collected through tests, a questionnaire, interviews, summaries and reflective journals. The results showed improvement in students’ academic and disciplinary literacies at the end of the year. Students reported that it was helpful to read Tourism texts, discuss them in isiXhosa and then write English summaries. Before being introduced to translanguaging, they simply used to re-write an entire text when summarising. After understanding texts in their own language, they could write brief summaries and not exceed the number of words allocated for the summary. The Tourism lecturer also confirmed the usefulness of the multilingual strategies, as the students’ learning and success in the module was enhanced. Nonetheless, the impact of using a range of multilingual strategies was complex, uneven across students and strategies, and changed over time. This suggests that when this initiative is broadened to other disciplines care should be taken to explore the best possible range of strategies to employ and also to research the impact of each strategy. Furthermore, while the project also included Afrikaans-speaking students, they did not form part of the research study. Consequently, a further aspect that needs to be researched is what impact the different strategies to develop multiple literacies has for different language groups.1. **The AHZ (Ayliff/Harran/Zauka) Project**

The AHZ Project initiative made use of multilingual teaching and learning spaces by creating a rich context for bilingual isiXhosa-English speakers to use both isiXhosa and English to develop their English language learning proficiencies through the use of translation and tutorial strategies.The results of the AHZ Project initiative revealed that students felt that the isiXhosa language was acknowledged as it was used for the teaching of English grammatical concepts in isiXhosa. This was done through the use of a translated text of the LES111 course workbook as well as by making use of code-switching and code meshing during tutorials that aided students to share what they had learned to other students in their own language. They also acquired the grammatical concepts better as a result of the conceptual clarity that they gained through using translations and code-switching. In terms of the perceptions of the students and staff towards the initiative, it was concluded that there was a positive attitude towards the initiative. The students felt it acknowledged their mother tongue in the teaching context and the lecturing staff felt that it helped the students to acquire the necessary grammatical concepts to meet the learning outcomes of the module (Ownhouse, 2015 – Master’s study).Among the **key enablers** identified in this project were:* the advantage of having a lecturing team that included an isiXhosa speaking lecturer;
* the availability of language experts to translate the course workbook; and
* funding from strategic sources and from the Teaching Development Grant.

One of the **challenges** that resulted was that two of the three lecturing members of the team retired. This highlights the need for larger teams and also for succession planning to ensure the sustainability of promising initiatives. 1. **Initiatives to develop isiXhosa as an Academic Language** (DHET Funded project with Dr Linda Kwatsha as project leader)

The umbrella project and sub-projects is assisting NMMU to implement its trilingual language policy. As isiXhosa is the home language of the majority of NMMU students, one of the aims of the umbrella project is to provide epistemological access to gaining knowledge and understanding subject content taught in English through translations into and tutorials in isiXhosa. A second aim is to employ isiXhosa as a Language of Teaching, Learning and Assessment through parallel teaching (in Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa), in tutorials in particular. This implies that isiXhosa is not only being used to support learning in a context where English is the language of teaching and learning, but in select modules isiXhosa will be used as one of the languages of teaching, learning and assessment together with English and Afrikaans. More information about the work being done in relation to these two aims is provided below.1. **Multilingual glossaries**

Twenty-three[[7]](#footnote-7) multilingual glossaries have been developed in a range of modules across all the faculties. These glossaries are requested by academics teaching the modules concerned which ensures ownership and indicates the willingness of these academics to explore how multilingual practices and initiatives can enhance student success in their modules. Qualitative interviews have been conducted to evaluate the impact of the glossaries in various modules. From this it can be concluded that lecturers and students find the glossary of terms very helpful to understanding key terms and concepts. In addition, tutors find these glossaries to be very handy as they refer to them when they are preparing for bilingual tutorial classes or responding in online tutoring contexts. 1. **Translated learning materials and course outlays**

The translated materials listed below were requested by the lecturers concerned to make the lectures more accessible to every student: • Philosophy introductory section of the manual• Public relations slides• Applied languages Manual; part 1 & part 2• Criminal justice lecture slides (Law)As can be seen from the above, translations requested span sections of lecture notes, teaching slides and translation of the introductory notes to a module in the module manual/guide. Students have indicated that they find these translations useful.In addition, capacity is being built in the African Languages section/department through developing the following in isiXhosa:• Language and linguistics module manual• Psychoanalysis literary theory manual• Deconstruction literary theory manual• Pragmatic linguistic theory reader• Research methods and methodology: Writing a proposal, a dissertation and thesis• Literary structuralism• Literary theory reader• Literary theory reader manual terminology development applied into context by using literary texts• Translation and creative writing manual• IsiXhosa manual for academic purpose for Under graduate and Post graduate isiXhosa speaking students• IsiXhosa manual on the science of isiXhosa language• Language planning readerThese module guides and readers were developed for isiXhosa-speaking students, especially post graduate students, since there are no isiXhosa theory books available at the moment. Students are allowed to write their proposals in isiXhosa and are developing them in a shorter period as a result of the methodology reader being available in their home language. The development of the isiXhosa resources mentioned above significantly assisted in encouraging students to read the theories in their own languages before they proceed to reading other papers in English. As a consequence, the students can now use the isiXhosa terms without putting the English term in brackets because the terms have already been agreed to by isiXhosa academics. The students who utilise the theories developed in isiXhosa as a framework for their research studies, are progressing well in writing their methodology and theory chapters.1. **Service and Select Modules in isiXhosa**

While a large part of the umbrella project focuses on making teaching and learning more accessible through the use of isiXhosa, there is a growing trend, especially in Health Sciences for students to enhance their proficiency in isiXhosa. To this end, there is a sub-project that is focusing on developing customised modules for various programmes. These include:• IsiXhosa for Health Science (manual and online materials included for blended learning purposes).• IsiXhosa for Media, Journalism and communication (first Semester module manual).• Select modules for media, journalism and public relations programmes are being developed to enable students to choose to do the module in isiXhosa, Afrikaans or English.• An Online isiXhosa for Communication has been developed to assist academics to enhance their isiXhosa communication proficiency, especially in terms of isiXhosa communication relevant to classroom context, at their own pace.1. **Bilingual tutorials**

A number of bilingual tutorials have been introduced in modules across the university, especially at a first year level. Tutorial groups meet face-to-face weekly with a trained bilingual tutor. During the tutorials difficult concepts are explained in both isiXhosa and English. Use is made of multilingual glossaries (Afrikaans, isiXhosa and English) during tutorials. Many of the non-English speakers who were in a group with isiXhosa speakers are able to brush up their knowledge and practise of the isiXhosa language. Furthermore, the isiXhosa speakers are able to understand the English instructions better without feeling overwhelmed and judged for not understanding the discipline-based concepts. While the bilingual tutor is often not fluent in Afrikaans, Afrikaans-speaking students are nonetheless able to enhance their understanding of the concepts by consulting their glossaries for the Afrikaans term and chatting about the concepts in Afrikaans with fellow Afrikaans-speaking students. Tutors are able to identify students that needed more guidance in developing their language proficiency and try to have more one-on-one meetings with these students to develop trust relationships with them in order to break the cultural and socio-linguistic barriers they were confronted with. e-Tutorials and advice are also increasingly being offered on NMMU’s Moodle-based Learning Management system which enables students to get assistance quicker to develop an understanding of important concepts through their home language. The impact of the bilingual tutorial initiative has been researched qualitatively through feedback from students and quantitatively through analysing module pass rates. Students generally respond favourably to the value-add of the bilingual tutorials while pass rates improve (e.g., in one module the pass rate improved from 60% to 75%).Among the **key enablers** identified in this umbrella project of multilingualism initiatives are:* the funding provided by the DHET as many of the sub-projects are resource-intensive;
* the high levels of commitment and motivation of the academics; and
* the involvement of students in facilitating tutorials and contributing to some of the resources developed.

Probably the main **challenge** of this umbrella project is the strong dependence on external funding. A sustainability plan needs to be developed to ensure that these initiatives can continue to be resourced and implemented beyond the current funding regime.1. **Multilingualism in a blended learning environment** (Ms Claudette Leppan)

This is a TDIF (see section 2) project underpinned by a humanising pedagogical approach. One way to support the learning process is to create online resources for students, which allows them to access content at their own time and from the venue of their choice. The project leader has an existing blended learning environment containing online resources, but she was concerned that the resources are not available in a language other than English. Consequently, the purpose of this multilingualism project is to translate and record video clips explaining module or programme-related concepts in Xhosa, Afrikaans and English. These clips will be made available on the blended learning platforms and the use of these clips will be monitored to see whether students access content in their mother tongue and whether it impacts on their academic performance. This project is still in its infancy. Students have made valuable input into the project which will shape how it unfolds in 2016.Why this project is highlighted is because there is a growing realisation that technology needs to be harnessed more effectively to expand the reach of the multilingual initiatives at NMMU. It is thus hoped that this project together with the online bilingual e-tutorials will provide valuable information to grow the use of technology to enhance student learning and literacy development through the use of multiple languages.Students present at the multilingualism conference expressed the view that making a digital resource such as Google Translate available during lectures could assist students to access key terms in their own language. Even although the accuracy of some of the Google translations is sometimes questioned, it gives students an opportunity to discuss the translated term and perhaps agree on another more appropriate one. Furthermore, the Disability Unit has recently purchased software called *Read and Write Gold* from Texthelp. It has a web dictionary that connects to the African languages. It utilises translation but also pictures and videos to help “define” what is meant be a word. At this point it is only accessible on NMMU bar coded computers, but explorations are underway to check how a student could use it when logged into the NMMU network for potential use in class.1. **English for Academic Studies (EAS)(Implementation project leader – Mukhtar Raban)**

NMMU’s Language Policy makes provision for both including multilingualism practices and to enhance English proficiency to reduce the extent to which language is a barrier to learning. During the *#feesmustfall* campaign students raised the issue of the language of teaching and learning. The view that NMMU students put forward was that there needed to be a concerted effort to increase the use of multiple languages in the teaching and learning environment as well as to enhance English proficiency.While a number of programmes include English and communication modules, and NMMU has a Writing Centre to assist with writing and literacies development, it was reflected in NMMU’s 2014 QEP report that more needed to be done and more resources needed to be made available to enhance and support the English proficiency development of our students.In partnership with Epigeum, NMMU participated with leading universities around the world to develop an English for Academic Studies (EAS) module. English for Academic Studies is an online training course designed for students who will be studying in English and need to improve their academic language skills. The programme includes the online materials, teacher training modules and implementation support required to move towards, or enhance, an online or blended approach to delivering training in academic English. EAS includes an additional course for tutors of academic English which will help them deliver the programme. The programme is available in two formats: Theme-based courses Skills-based coursesThe theme-based format contains a stand-alone introductory course aimed at students, and five further student-facing courses: Introduction course: Preparing for study: Academic culture, language and assessment Course 1: Types of academic English: Differences and key features Course 2: Core academic language: Functions, meaning and grammar Course 3: Academic identity: Position and voice Course 4: Criticality: Evaluating and questioning Course 5: Optimising your learning: Strategies and self-evaluationThe skills-based format contains the same stand-alone introductory course as in the theme-based version. There are then four further student-facing courses, each taught via the five themes: Introduction course: Preparing for study: Academic culture, language and assessment Course 1: Listening Course 2: Speaking Course 3: Reading Course 4: WritingSome of the online courses are suitable to use with undergraduate students and especially first-years whereas others are suited to postgraduate writing development, especially in research contexts. The EAS materials were released in August 2015. The remainder of 2015 was spent undertaking some customisation of the content and linking it to our Moodle-based LMS. In addition, demonstrations and an information session were undertaken. There is wide-spread interest to use the course content for various purposes at NMMU. Pilots will be run in a range of modules across the university in 2016. Among the **challenges** is that EAS has been critiqued for its skills based character which sees language as neutral and not bound to the disciplines. Research has shown that generic language course do not lead to transfer in the discipline. To address this challenge, awareness should be raised among lecturers that if they use the generic model, transfer will be temporary. Emphasis thus should be placed on how lecturers can make EAS specific to their disciplinary discourses. Assistance from language experts may be needed to help lecturers in this regard.Among the **key enablers** of the EAS project are the availability of funding from the Teaching Development Grant and the dedication of academic and academic development staff to contribute to the development of the EAS courses. As this is an international project, NMMU staff members have been given opportunities to attend webinars as well as to learn about learning design in an online environment from international experts. As a result, this development has served to enhance the teaching capacity of staff involved with the project in a very experiential way. This has provided a very interesting model for teaching development which NMMU might employ in other contexts as well. **3.3 Identify the main challenges the university still faces in relation to this focus area.**In terms of the pivotal aspects that we worked on in 2015, the main challenges are:* To continue the development and implementation of the First-Year Success programme in the face of resource challenges.
* To intensify our focus on the language of learning and teaching and expand the multilingualism initiatives to more effectively reduce the chances that language is a barrier to student learning and success. This will require the language policy to be revised during the course of 2016 based on a set of guiding questions developing in 2015. In addition, multilingualism initiatives will be showcased and a range of courageous conversations on the topic of the language of teaching, learning and assessment will be held.
* The student voice needs to be more intentionally drawn on to inform all aspects of student support, development and learning enhancement at NMMU. Figuring out how and when to involve students as well as what student groups should be engaged with provides a challenge that we need to rise to.

Among the other challenges that were raised in our 2014 QEP report and which we paid less attention to in 2015 are:* Find ways to improve class attendance – this has become critical. In 2016 the reasons for poor class attendance need to be surveyed so that appropriate strategies can be developed to enhance class attendance.
* Integrating and embedding academic literacies and graduate attributes in modules/ programmes. This will be addressed as part of the curriculum development and transformation process linked to re-positioning teaching and learning at NMMU (see section 2).
* Revisit the voluntary nature of most of the student development and support initiatives. It is possible that mapping some of the development and support programmes and services for recognition on the Co-curricular Record (CCR) could encourage more students to participate in them.
* Given a trend identified by academics in terms of an increase in assessment dishonesty, cribbing in tests and plagiarism in research assignments, more needs to be done to enable our students to demonstrate greater levels of academic integrity.
 |

|  |
| --- |
| **4. FOCUS AREA 3: ENHANCING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT** **(suggested length 10-20 pages)*****Include: teaching and learning spaces, ICT infrastructure and access, technology-enabled tools and resources, library facilities.***This section of the report should make reference to all of the sub-topics listed above. This will be done by integrating them throughout this section. |
| **4.1 Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in enhancing the learning environment.**In our QEP reflection[[8]](#footnote-8) submitted in 2014, it was noted that among the **key enabling** factors are:a. **A generally supportive and enabling learning environment** – which *inter alia* includes general lecture venues and specialised teaching and learning facilities; teaching laboratories; on campus access to computers, connectivity and computer literacy development; a Staff and Student Portal, the i-Learn Moodle-based Learning Management System (LMS); access to specialised software programmes; use of social media; blended learning training and support for academics and peer learning facilitators; study spaces; Library and Information Services; Academic Administration services; and transport between campuses.b. The ability and **in-house expertise** to design ICT and AV solutions that advances the use of technology in learning.Key **challenges** identified in the 2014 QEP reflective report that need to be urgently addressed are:1. **Teaching, experiential learning and assessment venues:** Modernising and refurbishing laboratories and older lecture venues that are less well suited to active and collaborative learning and the use of digital media. Identify and customise venues where e-assessment can take place.
2. Create more learning, study and rest **spaces**.
3. **Mind-set change:** Need to conceptualise that teaching and learning can take place 24/7 in and out of class (which includes online learning). This could reduce some of the need to teach everything face-to-face, which could lessen some of the demand for lecture venues.
4. **Timetabling:** Automated system to allocate students to class groups
5. **Bandwidth problems** which are exacerbated when large numbers of students access the Internet at the same time.
6. **Security** – laboratory equipment and technology often disappear from locked venues. Replacement is not only costly but it can disrupt teaching and learning if new equipment/technology needs to be ordered and takes a while to be delivered and installed.
7. **Lack of AV capacity** to support technology use, especially in sophisticated new teaching venues and laboratories.
8. Need to increase access to **mobile technology** and off campus **connectivity** for students and develop more “**charging stations**” (that are eco-friendly).

**4.2 During Phase 1 of the QEP, what changes at institutional level (a) have been made, and/or (b) are in progress that relate to enhancing the learning environment.**Aspects that were addressed or in which progress was made in 2015 include:1. **Teaching, experiential learning and assessment venues:** See section 4.3
2. Create more learning, study and rest **spaces:** See section 4.3.
3. **Mind-set change:** Need to conceptualise that teaching and learning can take place 24/7 in and out of class (which includes online learning). See section 4.3.
4. **Timetabling:** Automated system to allocate students to class groups is in the process of being developed and may be piloted in 2016.
5. **Bandwidth problems** remain an issue but should be resolved once the SKA project has been completed.
6. **Security** – Despite various measures that have been put in place, laboratory equipment and technology still disappear from locked venues.
7. **Lack of AV capacity** to support technology use, especially in sophisticated new teaching venues and laboratories: While there has not been an increase in capacity at a central level, some departments are using external funding to appoint AV technicians. This is not necessary ideal and some rethinking or re-prioritising of posts is required.
8. Access to **mobile technology** is being addressed by making students aware of national initiatives to purchase laptops and tablets at reasonable rates, making some devices available in libraries and we have two 24/7 computer laboratories for general use. NMMU’s Moodle-based LMS can be accessed on mobile devices and students are assisted to set-up their mobile devices at our Student IT Services (SITS) or via online instructions.
9. Off campus **connectivity** has been enhanced by creating Wi-Fi enabled study spaces on the Missionvale and Bird Street campuses that students can access, especially after hours. It is now a requirement that approved off-campus accommodation has Wi-Fi installed. Nonetheless, for many students off campus connectivity remains a problem.
10. More “**charging stations**” (that are eco-friendly) have been installed on all our campuses.

**4.3 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.**NMMU needs a more intentional plan related to building new lecture venues and learning spaces, refurbishing old venues, etc. However, before embarking on such a plan, it was decided that an audit of existing spaces and venues and how they were utilised was needed. To this end, KPMG Services (Pty) Ltd was appointed in September 2014 to develop a Space Utilisation model for NMMU[[9]](#footnote-9). The purpose of the project was to develop a Model to assist NMMU to understand utilisation at a point in time, in order to formulate strategies to optimise the use of space in the future. The project objective was to identify how space can be optimally utilised to promote the University’s long-term sustainability and competitiveness. The intended outcome of this project was therefore the development of a model to assist Executive Management and NMMU Faculty Executive Deans with decision making tools to ensure that space is utilised in such a way that it enhances the overall experience of NMMU students, academics and administrative staff. The model had to integrate existing spatial data and provide information to meet the specific requirements which can be summarised as:• Understanding the current utilisation of space at NMMU• Understanding the financial impact of the current utilisation of space based on allocated standard costs, and• Facilitate and support decision making on whether to build new facilities or improve utilisation of current space, depending on the needs.**Overall findings:**As would be expected based on the utilisation formula, both planned and actual utilisation rates are significantly lower than occupancy rates, when assessed against all available seating capacity. As an example, utilisation reached approximately 22% for the Summerstrand South Campus compared to the NMMU norms of between 37%-57%, depending on the applicable type of venue. The data would therefore suggest that improvements are possible in the utilisation of space at NMMU.**Recommendations**The findings derived from the Space Utilisation Model generated a number of recommendations for improvement. The recommendations were grouped into the following categories:• Financial recommendations• NMMU Space Norms recommendations• Monitoring and Governance recommendations• Current Infrastructure Supply recommendations, and• NMMU Operational RecommendationsSome of the most important areas for improvement relate to improved support for the Timetabling function, and the maintenance of Space Data in the institution. The desired outcome behind the collective recommendations is the adherence to the Space Norms that should apply to NMMU, as informed by comparative norms elsewhere in the world and those prescribed by the DHET.A few of the infrastructure and operational recommendations are focused on teaching and learning and the student learning experience. Relevant extracts from the report in this regard are provided below.**Current Infrastructure Supply recommendations**The apparent excess of smaller venues should be investigated, while the efficient use of larger venues should be prioritized. If new venues do need to be built, the general trend, based on the available data, suggests that larger venues are in shortest supply, as they experience the highest occupancy rates. The practicality of using the large number of unused small lecture venues should be investigated. They could possibly be used more extensively for study purposes by students.The challenges experienced in the efficient alignment of current infrastructure assets to the specific academic needs of the institution, may act as a driver for expanded blended learning activities in future. The continued implementation of blended learning interventions should be guided, in part, by modules that require the utilisation of larger venues and where some face-to-face sessions could be replaced by online engagement. As an example of such an exercise, the data in the model could be used to calculate the potential savings associated with each lecture period that is re-allocated from a large capacity venue to a digital-based delivery medium instead.**Option to improve learning experience through the use of GPS data**Given the availability of accurate geographical information for each venue, a potential future operational recommendation would be the use of real time GPS data, fed directly to the smart phones of students, allowing them to easily find lecture venues they have been allocated. This would be but one of the many technological innovations that the University could adopt to improve the learning experience of students through the use of spatial data.**4.4 Identify the main challenges the university still faces in relation to this focus area.**1. **Teaching, experiential learning and assessment venues:** Having invested in developing a space utilisation model, the recommendations made need to be captured in an action plan and actioned. The plan will be developed early in 2016.
2. **Minds-et change:** Need to conceptualise that teaching and learning can take place 24/7 in and out of class (which includes online learning). Change management strategies need to be developed to effect this mind-set change related to the length of a lecture “day” and where learning occurs.
3. **Timetabling:** The automated system to allocate students to class groups needs to be piloted in 2016.
4. Efforts need to continue to ensure that all our students have access to **mobile technology.**
5. Efforts need to continue to enhance off campus **connectivity** for students.
 |

|  |
| --- |
| **5. FOCUS AREA 4: ENHANCING COURSE AND PROGRAMME ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT (suggested length 10-20 pages)*****Includes: admissions, selection, placement, readmission refusal, pass rates in gateway courses, throughput rates, management information systems.***This section of the report should make reference to all of the sub-topics listed above. They will be integrated throughout this section. |
| **5.1 Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in enhancing course and programme enrolment management.**In our QEP reflection[[10]](#footnote-10) submitted in 2014, it was noted that among the **key enabling factors** related to course and programme enrolment management are:a. Data-driven and research-informed enrolment planning.b. Centralised undergraduate admissions process with the option of developmentally focused access testing for those who do not meet the direct entry admissions requirements.c. Clear, best practice procedures for postgraduate admission.d. Readmission procedures that are clearly articulated and communicated to students.e. Availability of statistics related to throughput and success rates and activities to address low throughput and success rates in gateway and high risk modules.Key **challenges** noted that need to be urgently addressed are:1. **Improved communication and alignment of functions** is needed between university administration structures and academic departments to create more seamless, integrated business processes.
2. **Research** is needed into the effectiveness of articulation and streaming options in terms of enhancing student success.
3. **Career guidance:** Develop a strategy to assist more first-time entering students to get career counselling early in their first semester. This has resource implications, some of which can be addressed by using psychology students who need to gain practical experience in career counselling. Online options should also be explored.
4. **Student tracking and early detection system:** (i) Fast-track the development of an electronic system to track student progress and detect at an early stage that a student needs assistance. (ii) In a parallel process, the availability of student advisors in faculties (but with a strong link to HEADS) who could follow up and have one-on-one sessions with students identified as being in need of development and support, would increase the likelihood that early detection could be matched with appropriate support and interventions. The appointment of student advisors has resource implications, as only one faculty and a few departments have student advisors at present.
5. **Re-admission:** (i) Fast-track the automation of the identification of students who do not meet the requirements for re-admission. (ii) Adjust rules so as not to exclude first year students and refine the process so that it is aligned better with re-examinations.
6. **Success and throughput rates and service modules:** (i) Develop a set of throughput strategies that have a track record of enhancing success and throughout rates which academics could use as a resource; (ii) Research the impact of strategies to enhance success and throughput rates; (iii) Develop a protocol related to service modules and strategies to encourage students to change their mind-set towards service modules.

**5.2 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 course and programme enrolment management, and (d) is there evidence of impact.**Of all the challenges listed above, the most pivotal one that needed to be addressed was to fast-track the development of a student tracking and early detection system. A tracking system will assist in putting students who are struggling in touch with resources at an early stage, assist in the identification of students who do not meet the readmission requirements, and make it easier to obtain data analytics and undertake research to guide intervention planning and the impact of such interventions. Work undertaken in 2015 with regard to developing a student tracking system will be outlined below. **5.2.1 Siyaphumelela Project** The Kresge Foundation has been funding a number of projects related to student success with a strong data analytics focus in South Africa in recent times. There was a call for project proposals in 2014. NMMU developed a proposal related to the need to develop a system to track student progress so that interventions could be put in place at an early stage and so reduce the risk of students dropping out or failing. Late in 2014 NMMU heard that it was one of the few universities that would receive funding from the Kresge Foundation as part of the Siyaphumelela Project that they launched in South Africa in May 2015.The project goals of the 3-year Siyaphumelela student tracking system project at NMMU are to:1. Develop a comprehensive set of student success indicators and data, and identify monitoring and evaluation methods and approaches for each indicator.
2. Develop an electronic early-warning tracking and monitoring system to monitor these indicators and student progress, and the extent to which students take up academic support and development opportunities.
3. Develop capacity to generate and use data analytics related to student success.
4. Improvement of student success initiatives.

The process to implement the Siyaphumelela project at NMMU entails:1. Evaluating what practices already exist at NMMU.
2. Formulating a ‘plan’ of what sort of early-warning, tracking and referral system NMMU wants, based also on inclusive discussions with NMMU academic, academic development and professional support service staff, and students.
3. Enhancing cooperation and coordination between all the key internal role players working to improve student success, thereby developing the overall capacity of the institution to provide better support to students and staff by providing more comprehensive and integrated information in support of enhancing student success.
4. Adding institutional research capacity over the course of the project.
5. Through the project and its research, NMMU will gain more insight into the impact of student academic support interventions.
6. NMMU will identify national and international data and learning analytics experts and invite them to provide training to various staff and institutional researchers at NMMU and. where appropriate, invite the other universities to attend if they so wish.
7. NMMU will also forge partnerships and alliances with the other Siyaphumelela institutions so as to pool resources and efforts to improve data analytics capacity and student success initiatives.

Among the achievements in the first year of the project in 2015 were:* A data coaching workshop was held for NMMU staff.
* Two NMMU staff attended the “Achieving the Dream Conference” in Baltimore, Maryland to learn more about student success initiatives in US Colleges.
* SASSE Workshop was held at NMMU to discuss SASSE 2014 findings and how to use them to enhance student success.
* Study tour of South African institutions was undertaken to gather information on what they are doing in terms of early warning, tracking and monitoring systems and how they utilize data to enhance their student success improvement strategies.
* Some NMMU staff attended the National Siyaphumelela Network Conference to report on progress and share ideas on best practices.
* Creating awareness and marketing the NMMU Siyaphumelela Project through the Dean’s forum and NMMU Teaching and Learning Committee.
* An institutional researcher was appointed for the project. He undertook a project to benchmark international and national best practices regarding early warning systems and conducted an audit of all existing indicators, practices and student early-warning/flagging efforts and interventions in departments at NMMU.
* Some of the early warning initiatives in place at NMMU were shared at a Siyaphumelela workshop on 21 August. A presentation was also made on the tracking system developed at Wits. In addition, participants brainstormed what factors should potentially be included in a tracking and early warning system.
* Based on the benchmarking research undertaken and the audit of existing practices and early-warning systems at NMMU, the blueprint for a student tracking system was developed. In particular, work done in the Faculty of Law in collaboration with ICT Services served as the basis for the electronic student system that NMMU is developing. It is called *RADAR* – Risk Analysis and Detection to Assist and Retain students. An important feature of RADAR is that it includes not only information about school and university performance but also information on the development and support opportunities in which a student is engaged.

RADAR will be piloted in one or two faculties in 2016 and attention will be given to how programme teams can meaningfully discuss the information to reach decisions about interventions and referral to support and development services and programmes. The possible inclusion of professional and support staff in these discussions will also be explored. Furthermore, a qualitative study will be conducted on student perceptions of the use of their personal data by the institution to track performance and refer them to an intervention to enhance student success, which will inform how we should to proceed with informed consent, comply with the POPI legislation and how we will roll out and scale the system. This will also serve as an awareness building opportunity for the early warning system with students.The following **enabling factors** have been identified to date:* The VC has been supporting the project and he is excited about having rich data available during discussions related to student success.
* After discovering that there are a number of student success initiatives in the faculties, we decided to build on to existing projects rather than starting afresh or duplicating existing initiatives. This approach has ensured that academics have a founding voice in the system being developed which should enhance ownership.

**Key lessons** learned to date are:* While it was useful to draw on existing initiatives in academic departments, issues of ownership are arising which will need to be addressed.
* There might be a need for customisation of the system for each faculty’s particular needs and approaches to student success initiatives.
* We need to obtain blanket ethics approval for the project given the large number of research studies being undertaken as well as the fact that student information is being used.
* From multi-disciplinary and multi-divisional project discussions, workshops and meetings, we are starting to build relationships among all the key internal role players that are working to enhance student success.

**5.3 Identify the main challenges the university still faces in relation to this focus area****5.3.1 Admissions, selection, placement**NMMU has a two-tiered developmentally-focused admissions process. Applicants either meet the direct admissions requirements or are referred for testing to see if they can be admitted based on test and school results. More than half of an intake is admitted via the latter route and each year about 39% (more than 2000) of the graduates are those that were admitted through the testing route. As a consequence of issues raised during the *#feesmustfall* protests and the introduction of an online application system at NMMU, there is a need to review and revise aspects of the admissions process. This includes:* Reviewing admissions criteria to ensure that they are fair and do not act as a barrier to access for economically-disadvantaged learners.
* Reviewing the access tests used and the admissions standards set on them to ensure that they are not biased against any group and that the information obtained is used in a fair way to make admissions decisions.
* Raising awareness about the purpose and nature of the access tests.
* Reflecting on the positive aspects and the challenges that arose with the online application system and adopting a multi-stakeholder approach to re-engineer aspects of the online system and the admissions process.

**5.3.2 Readmission refusal**The piloting and implementation of the RADAR system being developed by the Siyaphumelela project team will greatly assist the identification of students who do not meet the requirements for re-admission. In the meanwhile, while the student tracking system is still under construction, attention needs to be given to adjusting general and programme rules:1. so as not to exclude first year students; and
2. to refine the process of when to identify students who might not be readmitted so that it is aligned better with re-examinations.

**5.3.3 Pass rates in gateway courses**Attention needs to be given to:1. Develop a set of high impact throughput strategies that are known to enhance success and throughout rates which academics could use as a resource.
2. Research the impact of strategies to enhance success and throughput rates;
3. Develop a protocol related to service modules and strategies to encourage students to change their mind-set towards service modules.

**5.3.4 Career guidance:** Before developing a strategy to assist more first-time entering students to access career counselling, the Student Counselling, Career and Development Centre embarked on a re-imagining process. This process will be concluded early in 2016. Career counselling remains a core focus and given some of the re-imagining time could be freed up for some counsellors to do more career counselling. In addition, the online career advice and information service will be expanded and marketed as the first port of call for students and prospective students. Discussions are also underway with the Psychology Department about their students gaining practical experience in career counselling and stretching the reach of Student Counselling in the process. Other than the work that Student Counselling does, a partnership has been entered into with Epigeum to collaborate with other universities across the world to develop an online course called *Skills and Attributes for Career Success.*At least one academic department is piloting the appointment of academic advisors to assist students to navigate module and programme choices linked to a carer pathway. Lessons learned from this pilot will determine whether NMMU should introduce academic advising more widely.**5.3.5 Student tracking system**Once the RADAR system, developed as part of the Siyaphumelela project, and which was referred to in section 5.2.1, is fully functional, services and mechanisms need to be in place to provide the necessary support to students identified as experiencing difficulties with their studies. It is important that work in this regard begins sooner rather than later so that students that are identified as being in need of interventions can access and benefit from such interventions. |

|  |
| --- |
| **6. REFLECTION ON PHASE 1 OF THE QEP (suggested length 2-6 pages)** |
| **6.1 What has been the effect on the university of participating in the QEP for the past two years?**An opportunity was given to reflect as an institution on strengths and challenges in the four focus areas. Thereafter, line functionaries were tasked to address the challenges, especially by identifying the most pivotal one(s) in each area and then starting to tackle them.**6.2 In what ways did the university’s involvement in the QEP promote or strengthen collaboration with other universities on specific issues?**Awareness was raised regarding the work being done at other universities and best practices that could be employed at NMMU (e.g., the FYE work at the University of Johannesburg and student tracking systems at Wits and the University of Pretoria). This awareness was raised through:* Reading the CHE report that combined the reflections of the various universities and identified key trends and high impact practises in the four focus areas.
* Regional and national CHE workshops – some staff that don’t normally go to such workshops were given the opportunity to do so. They thoroughly enjoyed these workshops, got fresh ideas, and started to build networks with staff at other universities.

The extent to which such awareness–raising has led to concrete collaborations taking place with staff at other universities is still unclear. Where there is inter-institutional collaboration this was fuelled more by the national FYE conference and the Siyaphumelela conference than the QEP project. Nonetheless, this collaboration fed into aspects that were worked on as part of the QEP project.**6.3 Looking back over the past two years, in a page or two, summarise the university’s main triumphs, improvements, changes and challenges related to the four QEP focus areas.**In each of the four focus areas summaries were provided which will not be repeated here. Instead, some reflective comments will be made about pivotal aspects tackled, how the QEP was “driven” at NMMU, and what we have learned about the key enablers.1. **Operationalising the QEP at NMMU**
	* Rather than establishing QEP task teams, existing committees were used (e.g., the NMMU Teaching and Learning Committee and the Quality Committee).
	* Line functionaries were tasked with addressing challenges that fell in their area of responsibility.
	* In each focus area, pivotal aspects were identified and tackled in 2015 as they had the greatest potential to effect significant enhancement. These were:
		1. starting the process to re-position and re-imagine teaching and learning (focus area 1),
		2. conceptualising and piloting a First Year Success (FYS) programme (focus area 2),
		3. developing a space utilisation model (focus area 3), and
		4. starting the process to develop a student tracking system (focus area 4).
	* Where possible, projects tackled as part of the QEP were aligned with projects being tackled as part of the Teaching Development Grant (e.g., blended learning, teaching development and innovation funding, rewarding teaching excellence).
	* Recommendations and key challenges identified in the 2014 NMMU Phase 1 QEP report were drawn on when strategic plans for 2016 to 2020 were developed, which adds to the sustainability of the aspects tackled as part of the QEP work.
2. **Key enablers identified:**

Across the focus areas and projects key enablers identified were:* Funding to develop and implement initiatives and innovations (such as applying for TDIF funding as outlined in 2.3.1, which is made available from the Teaching Development Grant).
* Dedicated, motivated project leaders.
* Creating multi-disciplinary teams to drive some of the complex projects, which often became communities of practice.
* Involvement of students to provide input and also as research or teaching assistants, tutors, etc.
1. **Gathering evidence**

We reflected in our 2014 report that we needed to be more focused on gathering evidence of impact in a range of ways and from a range of sources. Reflecting on 2015, this remains a challenge. It is hoped that the Siyaphumelela project will assist NMMU to gather evidence more systematically and report on it.  |

**ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS USED**

AD Academic development

AP Academic Planning

CAAR Centre for Access Assessment and Research

CAEC Centre for Academic Engagement and Collaboration

CCR Co-Curricular Record

CTLM Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media

DALS Department of Applied Language Studies

Dept. Department

Dev. Development

DoSs Directors of Schools

FYE First-Year Experience

FYS First-Year Success

FYS-VA First-Year Success Virtual Academy

HEADS Higher Education, Access and Development Services

HoDs Heads of Departments

ICT Information and Communications Technology

LIS Library and Information Services

LMS Learning Management System

MANCO Management Committee of NMMU

MIS Management Information Services

NMMU TLC NMMU Teaching and Learning Committee

PASS Professional, Administrative and Support Staff

PG Postgraduate

Prog. Programme

QA Quality Advancement

SASSE South African Survey of Student Engagement

SCCDC Student Counselling, Career and Development Centre

SI Supplemental Instruction

SoTL Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

SoTLC Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Certificate

T&L Teaching and Learning

UG Undergraduate

1. *Quality Enhancement Project: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University submission: Phase 1* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. As discussions around the workload model were often only with line managers, there is a need to involve the rank and file academics in such discussions, especially in terms of feedback about how effective the model is in practice. Furthermore, some faculties did not feel that the workload model was appropriate for their context and have thus developed their own model. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Covered in Focus area 4 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Quality Enhancement Project: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University submission: Phase 1* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Groups in which 20 first-years studying the same academic programme are assisted with their transition by a trained senior student facilitator studying the same academic programme. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Quality Enhancement Project: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University submission: Phase 1* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Not all of these were developed using DHET funding. Some were developed by Thoko Batyi and her team in the Centre for Teaching Learning and Media from a strategic funding allocation. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Quality Enhancement Project: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University submission: Phase 1* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Draft Space Utilisation Report v2 - 4 December 2015, KPMG [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Quality Enhancement Project: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University submission: Phase 1* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)