

# **LOCAL CASE STUDY: MERGER SCENARIO WITH PIPELINE STUDENTS**

## **UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

*(MERGER OF THE FORMER UNIVERSITY OF NATAL AND UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE ON 01 JANUARY 2004)*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The former Universities of Natal and Durban-Westville merged on 1 January 2004 to become the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). This newly merged higher education institution continued operating in its first year as the two separate former universities, with the new Interim Executive Members overseeing the academic and administrative activities on the five campuses: Edgewood, Westville, Howard College, Medical School and Pietermaritzburg. In reality the merger only took place at the beginning of 2005 when the permanent University Council, the Vice-Chancellor, Executive Managers and College and Faculty Management were appointed. The permanent appointment of senior managers made it possible for the university to make firm decisions on academic, administrative and operational activities and functions.

### **2. UKZN'S DEFINITION OF PIPELINE STUDENTS**

It was important for the merged institution to have a clear understanding of the term *pipeline students*. To avoid any confusion, UKZN defined pipeline students as those already registered students from the merging institutions which the newly merged university inherited as a result of the merger. In addition, pipeline students are only those who registered for the same approved qualification/programme at either the former University of Natal or the former University of Durban-Westville prior to the merger on 1 January 2004; in other words, those students who were already in the system and who wished to continue with their studies in the same programmes they originally registered for at the two former universities that merged. The term excludes those inherited students who registered for a new approved qualification/programme at UKZN in January 2004.

With the above definition made known to the university community, the writer of this case study was able to contact the relevant persons for information and data. The Management Information Division provided the statistics which proved useful in tracking the pipeline students at each college, faculty and school across all five campuses.

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### **3. THE NEW INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE**

The University Council approved the new structure of the university, which consisted of four large colleges, each having two faculties and a number of schools. A Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) was appointed to head each of the four colleges. The new university structure was as follows: the College of Humanities, with the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences; the College of Law and Management, with the Faculty of Management Studies and the Faculty of Law; the College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science, with the Faculty of Science and Agriculture and the Faculty of Engineering; and the College of Health Sciences, with the Faculty of Health Sciences, and the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine.

The four Colleges were spread across five campuses. This meant that their faculties, schools and administrative departments had to relocate to other sites and campuses. The University Executive Committee<sup>2</sup> had to locate these as described in Sections 3.1 to 3.4.

#### **3.1 College of Humanities**

The DVC would be located on the Howard College campus.

##### ***3.1.1 Faculty of Education***

The Faculty of Education is located on two sites. The administrative headquarters with the Dean were to move to the Edgewood campus with some of the programmes being offered on the Pietermaritzburg campus. The former School of Educational Studies on the Westville campus was closed and staff and students from the former University of Durban-Westville had to relocate to the main Edgewood campus in Pinetown.

##### ***3.1.2 Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences***

The Faculty from the Howard College and Westville campuses was consolidated on the Howard College campus with a dean as the head there. The pipeline students in this faculty on the Pietermaritzburg campus were not adversely affected by the merger and continued to operate as before. However, the Dean had to travel to Pietermaritzburg, some eighty kilometres from his permanent office, to provide leadership and perform administrative functions for staff and students from his Faculty who were located there.

The pipeline students at the former University of Durban-Westville were allowed to register at the Westville campus and continue with their registered programmes on that campus.

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<sup>2</sup> The Executive Committee consisted of the Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, DVC (Planning), DVC (Research), DVC (Administration and Corporate Governance), four College Heads/DVCs, Executive Director (Access), Executive Director (Equity), Executive Director (Outreach), Executive Director (Public Affairs), Executive Director (Organisational Culture) and the Chief Finance Officer.

However, the staff had to relocate to the Howard College campus and had to commute from one campus to the other to give lectures. The administrative staff for the Faculty remained on the Westville campus to provide support and guidance to the pipeline students.

### **3.2 College of Law and Management Studies**

The newly appointed DVC and Head of this College would be based on the Westville campus.

#### ***3.2.1 Faculty of Management Studies***

The Westville campus would be the home of the Commerce and Management disciplines in this Faculty. The Faculty of Management Studies would be phased out at the Howard College campus and its staff and students would be relocated to the Westville campus. The Pietermaritzburg campus would be the second site delivery site. The pipeline students originally registered at the Howard College campus would be given the option to attend lectures on the Westville campus.

#### ***3.2.2 Faculty of Law***

Law is currently being taught at the Howard College, Westville and Pietermaritzburg campuses. The Faculty is headed by a Dean who has his main offices on the Howard College campus. The University Council decided to close the Faculty of Law at the Westville campus and offer law to all new and first entry students at the Howard College and Pietermaritzburg campuses. Only pipeline students would be allowed to register and continue with their law studies at the Westville campus. In other words, all new law students from the year 2005 would have to register either on the Howard College or Pietermaritzburg campuses.

### **3.3 College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science**

The DVC and Head of College would be based on the Pietermaritzburg campus.

#### ***3.3.1 Faculty of Science and Agriculture***

The Faculty would offer programmes at the Howard College, Westville and Pietermaritzburg campuses. However, not all programmes or majors were offered at all three campuses. In particular, Agriculture was offered only on the Pietermaritzburg campus. The intention was for this Faculty to have its home on the Westville campus and close those programmes on the Howard College campus. However, the pipeline students were taken into consideration during the relocation, with the least amount of movement and disruption being on the two main Durban campuses.

### ***3.3.2 Faculty of Engineering***

The Faculty is based at the Howard College campus but offers the BSc in Engineering Degree at the Howard College, Westville and Pietermaritzburg campuses. However, not all programmes would necessarily be offered on three campuses. In 2005 the first-year programme would lead into the new consolidated UKZN Engineering programmes, which have been developed from the Howard College campus programme (at the former University of Natal), incorporating appropriate components from the Westville programmes (at the former University of Durban-Westville).

From the beginning of 2005 all first-year students were to register for the new Engineering programmes only at the Howard College and Pietermaritzburg campuses. There would be no new registration of students at the Westville campus. The pipeline students would be allowed to register at the Westville campus. However, pipeline students from the Westville campus were to be bussed by the university to attend lectures on the Howard College campus. This arrangement gave pipeline students numerous problems, which resulted in protests and strikes on the campuses by the Students Representative Council (SRC) and the Engineering students.

### **3.4 College of Health Sciences**

This unique college has two faculties offering multi-professional programmes. These two faculties, one from each of the former universities, were not directly affected by the merger as their programmes were unique and different.

#### ***3.4.1 Faculty of Health Sciences***

This faculty is located on the Westville campus and continued to operate in the same manner during the pre- and post-merger phases. Thus its pipeline students were the least affected by the merger.

#### ***3.4.2 Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine***

The same can be said about this faculty, which continues to operate on the Congella site (Durban Campus) with the same professional programme offerings and the same staff as at the former University of Natal. The pipeline students at this medical school were not affected by the merger.

## **4. THE IMPACT OF THE MERGER ON PIPELINE STUDENTS**

With the finalisation of the new management structure the DVC (Planning) set time frames for implementing the new university structure. In practice the formation of colleges, faculties, and schools and their future new homes was finalised only at the beginning of 2005. This meant relocating staff and students and other administrative functionaries to other sites and campuses.

It was agreed that the existing policies and procedures were to continue in the post-merger phase (2005) as transitional arrangements to accommodate the very different policies and procedures of the two merged partners. While the new students had to follow the new policy and procedures, the pipeline students on the various programmes were to continue with the old rules and policies of the former two universities.

The merged institution was sensitive to the concerns of the pipeline students and the existing academic, administrative and support staff who were affected by the merger and the new institutional structures. The extent and severity of the merger's effect on pipeline students were determined primarily by

- the different university-wide policies and procedures;
- the consolidation and restructuring of academic programmes, e.g. new modules, changes in credit points of modules, and timetabling of lectures;
- the relocation of academic programmes with the physical movement of faculties, schools and lecturing staff;
- the new venues and facilities;
- the different cultural and educational settings; and
- the lecturers' different teaching methodologies, assessment methods and philosophies.

The Heads/DVCs of the colleges and the College Management had to apply their minds to the different rules and regulations governing the various subject disciplines. This was a major challenge in the absence of a unified university-wide policy addressing the various permutations of the former two universities' academic programmes. The task was made even more difficult as the merged institutions dealt with staff and student populations from very diverse educational backgrounds, culture, ethos, residential environment, mode of transport and hostel accommodation. The difficulties were further compounded by two completely different systems of admission requirements, fee structures, access, student support, financial aid, class sizes and general rules and regulations. Each faculty was expected to be sensitive to pipeline students' problems and to make transitional arrangements that could best accommodate them.

The impact of the merger on the pipeline students could be gauged by the actual student numbers. Tables 1, 2 and 3 below provide the statistics of pipeline students for 2004 and 2005.

**Table 1: Total registration and graduation of pipeline students for 2004–2005**

Level	2004			2005		
	Reg. <sup>1</sup>	Grad. <sup>2</sup>	Changed qualification or exited <sup>4</sup>	Reg.	Grad.	Changed qualification or exited
U/G Total	19267	4232	3020	12015	4135	2011
P/G Total	6066	1635	1351	3080	738	1079
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>25333</b>	<b>5867</b>	<b>4371</b>	<b>15095</b>	<b>4873</b>	<b>3090</b>

*Notes:*

1. Reg. – students registered at census date in the reporting year and who were registered for the same approved qualification prior to 2004.
2. Grad. – students shown under REG who graduated for the same qualification at the end of the reporting year.
3. Changed qualification or exited – displays the number of students who were registered in the reporting year, did not graduate and did not register for the same approved qualifications in the following year. This figure includes dropouts, exclusions and changed approved qualifications.

A better understanding of the overall data is obtained by categorising the pipeline students per faculty and clustering them under undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Tables 2 and 3 give a breakdown of pipeline students per faculty. This is important because faculties and schools, together with their programmes, relocated to other campuses and delivery sites and this directly affected the pipeline students.

**Table 2: Undergraduate pipeline students: 2004–2005**

Level	Faculty	2004			2005		
		Reg.	Grad.	Changed qualification or exited	Reg.	Grad.	Changed qualification or exited
U/G	Education	1843	631	156	1056	420	151
	Engineering	1903	278	203	1422	309	314
	Science & Agriculture	2548	569	269	1710	609	303
	Health Sciences	2065	281	1109	675	262	56
	Humanities, Dev. & Soc. Sciences	3221	775	488	1958	796	390
	Law	1295	262	113	920	234	105
	Management Studies	5442	1257	675	3510	1207	677
	Medicine	950	179	7	764	298	15
	<b>U/G Total</b>	<b>19267</b>	<b>4232</b>	<b>3020</b>	<b>12015</b>	<b>4135</b>	<b>2011</b>

Table 2 shows that 19 267 students were categorised as pipeline students who registered in 2004 at the newly merged university and continued studying for an undergraduate programme. Of this number only 4232 graduated while 3020 either dropped out, were excluded, or changed the approved qualification. The only concern was the huge discrepancy in the Faculty of Health Sciences where, of the 2065 students registered, 1109 either dropped out, were excluded or changed their original qualification. Only 675 of the 2065 pipeline students continued their studies in 2005. Another concern was that although most of the Health Sciences programmes were of a four-year professional duration, 375 will still continue in the system after 2005. This trend was difficult to explain as the Faculty of Health Sciences did not merge with another faculty or restructure its approved programme.

Another striking feature that was noticed was that the Faculty of Management Studies was the largest faculty, with 5442 students. This faculty staff will continue to provide lectures at the undergraduate level for over 1626 students who were to continue as pipeline students into 2006.

**Table 3: Postgraduate pipeline students: 2004–2005**

Level	Faculty	2004			2005		
		Reg.	Grad.	Changed qualification or exited	Reg.	Grad.	Changed qualification or exited
P/G	Education	1018	431	129	458	192	105
	Engineering	229	35	39	155	50	38
	Science & Agriculture	617	140	70	407	107	103
	Health Sciences	90	29	18	43	9	16
	Humanities, Dev. & Soc. Sciences	1014	260	201	553	127	185
	Law	211	61	41	109	22	44
	Management Studies	2423	658	753	1012	198	468
	Medicine	464	21	100	343	33	120
<b>P/G Total</b>		<b>6066</b>	<b>1635</b>	<b>1351</b>	<b>3080</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>1079</b>

The merged university inherited over 6066 postgraduate students at the beginning of 2004. Of this number, over 2343 graduated (1635 in 2004 and 738 in 2005), leaving a large number of 1263 who had not completed their postgraduate studies at the end of 2005. At the postgraduate level, the Faculty of Management Studies again had the highest number, with 2423 pipeline students, and had to cater for 346 of these students after 2005. This meant that although this faculty was relocated on the Westville campus, postgraduate supervision was to continue on the campuses where the students first registered. This had implications for staff who had to commute from one campus to the other to provide lectures and support for the postgraduate pipeline students. However, this arrangement did not affect the Pietermaritzburg campus.

An interesting observation from Table 3 above is that 2089 (1351 in 2004 and 738 in 2005) postgraduate pipeline students either changed their original programme, were excluded or exited the university during 2004 and 2005. The University will be faced with the challenge of accommodating those students who exited the university during 2004 and 2005, (perhaps for financial reasons) and who wish to continue their postgraduate studies after 2005. Unfortunately it did not have in place a ‘sunset’ policy or clause at this stage for those students who wished to continue with their postgraduate work after a break in their studies.



#### **4.1 Protest action by students as a result of the merger**

During the student registration period from 7 to 12 February 2005 the students went on a protest march at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The SRC organised a student protest march and strike at the Westville and Howard College campuses. The issues raised by the student body were

- the exclusion of pipeline students because of poor academic results over the past years,
- the movement of engineering students and transport costs from Westville campus to Howard College campus, and
- outstanding fees and the allocation of financial aid for students.

These issues raised by students were carefully deliberated on by the full Executive Committee at a meeting held on 8 February 2005. An attempt was made to objectively evaluate the requests and to respond in a manner aimed at reaching agreement so as to restore stability and continue the registration process on 9 February 2005. The response was then discussed in detail with representatives from the SRC.

#### **4.2 Admission requirements and access affecting pipeline students at UKZN**

##### ***4.2.1 Fees structure***

There were huge disparities in the fee structures between the merging partners, ranging from 40 to 100 percent. Generally the tuition fees were lower at the University of Durban-Westville than at the University of Natal. The former University of Natal structured its fees according to the weighting of credit points for the modules. At the former University of Durban-Westville the fee structure varied from one faculty to the other; for example, the modules registered in the Faculties of Engineering and Health Sciences were much higher than those registered in the Faculties of Humanities and Education.

The new University Council approved an overall increase of 3.7 percent in 2004 and 6 percent in 2005 in the past tuition fees for all programmes across all the colleges. The challenge was to harmonise the fee structure at the newly merged university by 2007. The University Council was aware of the financial burden this placed on all students and capped all fee increases to a maximum of 20 percent in 2004 and 2005 and ten percent in 2006, with the aim of achieving parity in fees by 2007.

##### ***4.2.2 Admission and access to programmes***

There were no changes to the admission requirements and access for the pipeline students who were already registered for the various programmes, so the returning students were not affected by the new admission requirements for the restructured programmes at the four

colleges. However, a number of students were refused admission to the new university at the beginning of 2005. The two main reasons for this were outstanding financial fees from the previous years, and the former universities' exclusion policy.

#### **4.2.3 Outstanding fees**

The outstanding fees issue was addressed through a new system of appeals, referred to as Registration Appeals. The pipeline students with outstanding financial fees from the previous years who wished to continue with their studies had to follow this system, which was not taken from either of the former institutions but was a hybrid model giving all students the right to appeal in writing. These appeals were handled by a committee, and those above the cut-off amount were dealt with by a smaller executive committee, on which a student representative also sat. The system was the same for the whole university. The way forward as agreed at the time of writing was as follows.

- The cohort of students involved were to be identified by means of the appeals process. As students submitted their appeals, their applications were reviewed to ensure that they were complete, and the students were then issued with proof of submission, which allowed them access to housing and other services.
- A full-time appeals committee met from 10 February 2005, to get finality on the submissions.
- The debt from before 2004 would be treated separately from the debt incurred after that date. Students would be responsible for paying 50 percent of their commitment for 2004, and had to make clear arrangements for clearing their pre-2004 debt and paying the rest of their fees for 2004. Consideration would be given to converting the pre-2004 debt to a student loan.

#### **4.2.4 Academic exclusions**

Some students were excluded from the university because of poor performance and the former institutions' exclusion policy. This applied mainly to students from the former University of Durban-Westville where academic exclusions were recommended by the various faculties based on the end of year academic examination results and records. All exclusions and appeals were handled by the Registrar's Office. At the former University of Natal, exclusions and appeals were managed at the end of each semester by the Dean's Review Committee. The recommendations from individual faculties were tabled before the Senate Re-admissions Appeals Committee.

However, on 28 June 2004 the UKZN Senate approved a uniform policy on exclusions and appeals. This new policy applied to all students registered at the merged university in November 2004. The university handbook, *General Academic Rules and Rules for Students: 2005*, covers these aspects in Sections GR30<sup>3</sup> and GR31.<sup>4</sup> This new model has two structures, the Faculty Appeals Committee and the Academic Exclusions and Appeals Committee.

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<sup>3</sup> GR30 'Academic exclusion

Over 1866 pipeline students were excluded from the November 2004 and January 2005 examinations because of unsatisfactory results. This led to protest actions by the SRC during the 2005 registration process. As a result of negotiations between the SRC and the University Executive, an appeals process was established and 817 students lodged appeals to the university. It was decided that final exclusion of students who had appealed be suspended, subject to the following conditions:

- Registration was for the first semester on a curriculum approved by the Dean.
- The student had to make suitable arrangements to pay fees.
- The registration was subject to the outcome of the audit currently under way.

The final outcome of the audit was to be conveyed to the students as soon as possible. The Faculty of Engineering dealt with some specific problems, especially with the third-year level 2005 students, by

- allowing registration across two levels, and
- not applying the exclusion rules to this group of students in 2005.

The committee that dealt with exclusions recommended that the faculty, in consultation with the Office of Organisational Culture, put in place mechanisms and processes to ensure that there was proper integration of students.

#### ***4.2.5 Allocation of funds***

Since the merging partners had different policies for allocating funds to students, a new transitional arrangement was developed to accommodate the students. At a special meeting between the SRC and the University Executive, it was agreed that students be identified for funding based on the average mark obtained for all modules for which the student registered, which must be 50 percent or more, as well as the percentage of modules passed, which also has to be 50 percent or more. The practice at the former University of Durban-Westville was to simply consider the percentage of modules passed.

It was agreed at the meeting that all students who had applied for financial aid, and were eligible for financial aid because of financial need and who had passed 50 percent of the modules attempted or had obtained an aggregate of 50 percent in modules attempted, would

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(a) The Council may, with the approval of the Senate, after each examination session exclude or refuse to renew or continue the registration of a student who has failed to meet the academic requirements for continued registration.’

<sup>4</sup> GR31 ‘Academic exclusions – right of appeal

- a) Students have the right to appeal against academic exclusion in terms of Rule GR30.
- b) a) Such appeal shall be lodged in the Faculty of registration, in the prescribed manner, within ten (10) University working days of the release of final results.
- c) b) The process for consideration of such an appeal shall be approved by the Senate.’

be identified for funding, subject to consultation with the other SRCs. This concession was not to alter the total amount the university had available for financial aid to students.

## **5. DUPLICATION AND OVERLAP BETWEEN PROGRAMMES**

The newly merged university, with the exception of the unaffected Faculties of Health Science, Medicine and Agriculture, had three streams of programmes, namely

- the programmes of the former University of Durban-Westville,
- the programmes of the former University of Natal, and
- the new reconfigured programmes of the newly merged University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Besides the duplication and overlap of programmes, the curricula also differed in content, philosophy and methods of assessment. The new consolidated programmes also contained modules of the two 'existing' programmes, but the module codes and, in some cases, the new names of the modules were different. The pipeline students were given the option either to

- continue with the existing curriculum and the credits to complete the programme they had originally registered for, or
- carry their accumulated credits from their previously registered programmes and then register for the new reconfigured programme in the same discipline.

The most affected was the Faculty of Engineering, where students had to attend lectures at Howard College campus and lecturers had to move from one campus to the other to give lectures. This arrangement of bussing students ten kilometres between the two Durban campuses did not work as expected, mainly because the two had different timetables and their lectures had different starting times and durations. There were similar arrangements in the Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Science where there was duplication of programmes but in these two faculties the lecturing staff had to travel to cater for the pipeline students on the two campuses.

## **6. CREDITS AND WEIGHTING OF MODULES AND PROGRAMMES**

The credit value of the modules and the programmes/qualifications were also different at the former universities. UKZN introduced uniform credits across all four colleges and programmes. The credit points for all new reconfigured programmes have to be in multiples of eight. However, the pipeline students were to continue with the existing programmes and with the credit weightings of the former universities. These weightings differed considerably for similar programmes, with modules having credit points as various as 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 20 and 22. The weightings also varied from faculty to faculty at the former University of Durban-Westville. The former University of Natal used the credit point system with multiples

of eight. Pipeline students were allowed to register for the new reconfigured modules and carry those credits towards their registered programmes. In some cases the lecturing staff were burdened with an extra teaching load because of the ‘ancestor’ modules which accommodated the pipeline students, i.e. those modules that the two universities had in place before the merger.

## **7. MULTI-CAMPUSES**

UKZN is one of the largest face-to-face higher education providers in South Africa, with its five campuses spread over the cities of Durban, Westville, Pinetown and Pietermaritzburg. The four colleges have some faculties, schools and programmes at more than one campus. For example, the Faculty of Education, based at the Edgewood campus, also offers some common education programmes on the Pietermaritzburg campus. The distribution is as follows:

- The Medical School campus: Medical qualifications
- The Howard College campus: Engineering, Humanities, Law
- Westville campus: Science, Health Science, Management Science
- Edgewood campus: Education
- Pietermaritzburg campus: Education, Agriculture, Science, Engineering, Law, and Humanities.

## **8. POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS**

Table 3 (see Section 4, above) provides the statistics for postgraduate pipeline students, showing that there were 6066 in 2004 and 3080 in 2005. The status quo of their former university continues to apply to these students across all five campuses: the same policy and procedure for registration, the same rules and regulations as had applied from the date of their first registration there, the same procedures for supervision, submission and examination. They will continue registering at the campus where they first registered and continue with the same promoter/supervisor. Only those from the School of Educational Studies on the Westville campus had to move to the Edgewood campus as the site of delivery at the Westville campus was closed to the education students.

Table 3 shows that 2089 (1351 in 2004 and 738 in 2005) postgraduate pipeline students either changed their original programme, were excluded or exited the university during 2004 and 2005. As mentioned earlier, the university will be faced with the challenge of accommodating these pipeline students who did not register during 2004 and 2005, (perhaps for financial reasons). These students may at a later stage wish to continue their postgraduate studies, but unfortunately the merged university does not have in place a sunset policy or clause for those students who wish to pick up their postgraduate studies after a break.

## **9. PROFESSIONAL BODIES**

The professional bodies and other external bodies, such as the Higher Education Quality Assurance (HEQC), will continue to visit and accredit all programmes and qualifications as they did before the merger. The Faculty of Engineering and the Schools of Accountancy and Pharmacy will be accredited by the relevant professional bodies during 2005. The HEQC conducted a national teacher education review of the Masters in Education programme in the Faculty of Education in 2005. This was preceded by the follow-up of a site visit by the HEQC on the conditional accreditation of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme.

## **10. DURATION OF PIPELINE PROGRAMMES AND RETURNING OR REPEATING STUDENTS**

All three- or four-year programmes will remain the same. Pipeline students will accumulate their credits from modules passed and graduate on obtaining the required number of credits. The duration of their programme will depend on their year of study and how many modules they pass. It is envisaged that all pipeline students pursuing either a three- or four-year degree programme will successfully complete the programme for which they first registered and be out of the system by the end of 2006. At the time of writing there was no rule stipulating the maximum numbers of years the returning or repeating students would be given to complete their 'existing programme', be it a three- or four-year first degree programme or a postgraduate research degree. However, failed and repeating students were advised to register for new modules in the same programme. Faculties and schools were at liberty to make recommendations on the basis of individual cases as the university was not prepared to formulate a policy on this very complex issue.

## **11. AMENDING OR RECONCILING DIVERGENT RULES**

The two merging partners brought into the newly merged university very different policies and rules. The Registrar's Office together with the relevant sectors from Student Administration amended and reconciled the various policies and regulations for UKZN, consolidating them to apply to all new and pipeline students across all five campuses. The handbook *General Academic Rules and Rules for Students: 2005* contains common academic rules for degrees, diplomas and certificates, assessments, exclusions, code of conduct, discipline, and residence and traffic regulations.

## **12. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) SYSTEMS**

The university's IT systems currently operate as the former universities' two separate systems, i.e. the pipeline or returning students are still on the IT systems as captured on the date of their first registration. During the 2005 registration the IT systems administered the separate 'old' systems for pipeline students, the Westville campus following the former University of Durban-Westville's system and the other four campuses following the former University of Natal's system. All new students, including those changing qualifications, were registered on

the former University of Natal's system, ensuring that the rules and processes were applied consistently.

At the time of writing, a single centralised Management Information System had been established under the Planning Division to oversee the management of information for all five campuses. Similarly, a centralised IT system under the Research Division deals primarily with computer hardware, software and electronic communication across all five campuses. Both these centralised units are at present integrating the old systems and creating a single uniform system for the new university. Although pipeline students have a common student registration card, their academic records and other details are still being stored separately until the data are fully integrated.

During registration, pipeline students were treated differently in that they were registered for the old approved qualification but with new module codes. This was a technical decision until the Student Management System (SMS) was fully integrated. All students registered will carry the same information on all five campuses and reflecting the student profile of the new institution.

### **13. QUALITY ASSURANCE ISSUES**

Quality related issues are managed by the Quality Promotion and Assurance division under the DVC (Planning). Each of the four colleges has set up a College Quality Committee with the terms of reference approved by the Senate. These committees will review and make recommendations to the College Academic Board reports received on the external school reviews and evaluation of programmes/qualifications. Each college will have a Quality Consultant from the Quality Promotion and Assurance to assist and support the Faculty and School Quality Committees on all quality related issues.

It must be noted that the merging institutions had similar centralised and dedicated quality assurance offices to oversee the quality management of all academic activities across faculties. The integration of the two quality assurance offices did not affect the pipeline students as the quality mechanisms and processes evaluated through questionnaires and surveys continued in the new university through the Quality Promotion and Assurance division.

### **14. ASSESSMENT**

The handbook *General Academic Rules and Rules for Students: 2005* has common academic rules for degrees, diplomas and certificates, including assessment. Common or general forms of assessment will apply to those programmes for which pipeline students have registered. However, each College Quality Committee and the College Academic Affairs Board will monitor and evaluate the teaching and learning and assessment at the respective college. The College Academic Affairs Board will also recommend to Senate all assessment (both formative and summative) of all programmes. The DVC and Head of each college will be accountable for the assessment arrangements and management at the respective colleges.

All examination records and other forms of assessment were captured by the respective Faculty Officers. The SMS was centrally controlled by the IT division. Although the examinations were written across five campuses, the Student Administration based on the Westville Campus managed the examination timetable and scheduling and the final capturing of the examination marks. The new university's examination results were thus released for the five campuses on the same day in a uniform result format, ensuring that the pipeline students were treated and cared for in the same way as all other students and their identity as UKZN students respected.

## **15. INTER-INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

The university policy was that movement of students from one campus to another should be kept to a minimum, so it proposed that academic staff should instead travel to the various campuses to accommodate the students. The most affected pipeline students were from the Faculty of Engineering from the former University of Durban-Westville. Besides travelling to Howard College campus where the Faculty of Engineering was relocated, these pipeline students were originally accommodated in the hostels at Westville campus. This relocation led to protests and marches by students on the Westville campus. As a result, several meetings and discussions on the movements and relocation of schools and programmes took place between the SRC and the University Executive, which resulted in some formal agreements between the two parties.

There is a serious shortage of student housing in the city, so every attempt was made to adequately accommodate UKZN students. At the time of writing, UKZN was in a dispute with the landlord of the Springfield Hostel, and this was a legal matter which was being resolved. Meanwhile, the institution had made an alternative arrangement to secure 344 beds to replace Springfield Hostel, in case it was unable to secure that residence for the students.

In terms of the agreement reached with the Westville SRC on residence allocation, only returning students who had lived in residences in 2004 and the first-year students who had been offered accommodation were being catered for at this stage. The SRC and the University Executive had agreed to the following:

- 280 spaces in Four Seasons will be allocated immediately to students from the Westville campus. This will take care of the group expecting accommodation at Springfield Hostel.
- All students eligible according to the agreement will be allocated specific residence space not later than 12 February 2005.
- If any further accommodation becomes available during the year, this will be taken on as an addition rather than a replacement, thus increasing the number of rooms.

## **16. ACADEMIC MATTERS**

The movement of the Engineering students from the former University of Durban-Westville, was precipitated by



- the need for equitable facilities for a common programme;
- the high cost of upgrading Westville facilities to the required standards for a short period, since the faculty is to be consolidated at the Howard College campus;
- insufficient staffing levels in the Faculty to duplicate programmes; and
- the high cost of hiring part-time lecturers.

The following arrangements have already been made:

- Residential accommodation will remain on the Westville campus, but transport will be made available to Howard College campus.
- All student accommodation has been consolidated on the Westville campus.
- All teaching will be done on the Howard College campus.
- Procedures and processes have been put in place to ensure the proper integration of students and staff at Howard College campus.

It was not only the Engineering pipeline students who were affected by relocation; Faculty of Education pipeline students were also affected in 2004. The movement of Engineering students in 2005 had been planned since December 2004 and if through an oversight some stakeholders were not involved, this was regretted. UKZN anticipated that further meetings could be held to clarify issues.

## **17. CONCLUSION**

From the experience gained from the UKZN merger, it could be stated categorically that no rigid blueprint policy or manual could be developed to guide other merging institutions. Each merger carries with it a host of challenges and unexpected problems on an almost daily basis. The context of the merger and the institutions' histories play vital roles in the negotiations in almost every dimension of the merger scenario.

A centralised merger office should be established to assist and support both staff and students during the pre- and post-merger phases. It is important to appoint a mature and senior academic to this merger office, a person who is neutral, dynamic and has a vision to succeed. The centralised merger office should be tasked to document the merger process and highlight strengths and weaknesses to which other merging institutions could be alerted. The costs incurred through the merger also need to be captured and published. In many merger scenarios the human element is either ignored or taken for granted. This merger office needs to elicit the feelings of the staff and students who were directly affected by the merger.

The UKZN merger is still viewed as work in progress after two years. A tremendous amount has been achieved but there are many issues yet to be resolved.

## **REFERENCES**

The following university documents were consulted:

College Handbook: 2005. (Four in all)

General Academic Rules and Rules for Students: 2005 UKZN Booklet.

Response by the Executive Committee to Westville SRC's Memorandum dated 8 February 2005.

University of KwaZulu-Natal website [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

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