



COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT REPORT

ON THE

MANGOSUTHU UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACAE	Areas of Collaborative Academic Excellence
ALLU	Academic Literacy and Language Unit
APC	Academic Planning Committee
APP	Annual Performance Plan
ARCC	Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee
ASAQS	Association of South African Quantity Surveyors
BUSSE	Beginning University Survey of Student Engagement
CEAD	Community Engagement and Development Directorate
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
CHE	Council for Higher Education
COBIT	Control Objectives for Information and Related Technologies
CTT	COVID-19 Task Team
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DIPR	Directorate of Institutional Planning and Research
DUT	Durban University of Technology
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
ECSA	Engineering Council of South Africa
EMC	Executive Management Committee
FIC	Finance and Investment Committee
FTE	Full-time equivalent
FQAC	Faculty Quality Assurance Committee
FYE	First-Year Experience (Programme)
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GPS	Getting Prepared for Success
HDI	Historically Disadvantaged Institution
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEITSA	Higher Education Information Technology South Africa
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HoD	Head of Department
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
HR&D	Human Resources and Development (Department)
IASB	International Accounting Standards Board
IOP	Institutional Operational Plan
IP	Intellectual Property
IP	Improvement Plan
IQA	Institutional quality audit
IRDCE	Institute for Rural Development and Community Engagement
IT	Information Technology

ITIL	Information Technology Information Library
IT&N	Information Technology & Networks Department
ITS	Integrated Tertiary Software
KPA	Key Performance Area
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KRI	Key Result Indicator
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LMS	Learning Management System
LSSE	Lecturer Survey of Student Engagement
MarComms	Marketing and Communications Department
MSEU	Mathematics and Science Education Unit
MILE	Municipal Institute of Learning
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MUT	Mangosuthu University of Technology
NDP	National Development Plan
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PGDHE	Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education
PDP	Professional Development Programme
PjBL	Project-Based Learning
PRC	Planning and Resource Committee
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
PSET	Post School Education and Training
QAF	Quality Assurance Framework
QEP	Quality Enhancement Project
QMD	Quality Management Directorate
RAM	Resource Allocation Model
RMTLAP	Remote Multimodal Teaching and Learning and Assessment Plan
SABPP	South African Board for People Practices
SACPCM	South African Council for Project & Construction Management
SACQSP	South African Council for the Quantity Surveying Profession
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAGC	South African Geomatics Council
SAMP	Student Affairs Management Panel
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASSE	South African Survey of Student Engagement
SAULM	Students' Access to and Use of Learning Materials (Survey)
SER	Self-evaluation Report
SET	Science, Engineering and Technology
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SLA	Service Level Agreement

SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SOTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
SRC	Student Representative Council
SWD	Students (living) With a Disability
TLDC	Teaching and Learning Development Centre
TLDC-SSS	TLDC Student Support Service
TOGAF	The Open Group Architecture Framework
TPDU	Teaching and Professional Development Unit
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCDG	University Capacity Development Grant
UoT	University of Technology
VC	Vice-Chancellor
VPN	Virtual Private Network
WC	Writing Centre
WCO	Writing Centre Online
WIL	Work-integrated learning
WLM	Workload Model

Executive Summary

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) was established through the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997, as amended) primarily to assure quality in the South African higher education sector and to advise the Minister on aspects of higher education. The National Qualifications Framework Act (No. 67 of 2008, as amended) conferred additional responsibilities on the CHE as the Quality Council for higher education, with overall responsibility for the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). The CHE executes its quality assurance responsibilities through its permanent committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The CHE, through the HEQC, exercises its quality assurance function using a variety of mechanisms, one of which is institutional audits that are mandated by the Higher Education Act.

The *Framework for Institutional Audits (2021)*¹ and its attendant *Manual for Institutional Audits (2021)*² are key instruments to regulate the implementation of institutional audits. These documents are also aligned in important aspects to the new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)³ that was approved by the HEQC and Council in September 2020 and which will be implemented in the medium term by the CHE. Institutional audits are strongly influenced by both the specific context within which each HEI works, and by the national transformational agenda within which higher education functions. The HEQC has identified a need to do full audits of all HEIs in South Africa. A full audit of an institution determines whether or not, and to what extent, an institution's IQA systems, policies and procedures ensure the effective provisioning of good quality higher education that enhances the likelihood of student success through quality learning and teaching, research opportunities and integrated community engagement. The emphasis is less on ensuring that required standards are met at a particular threshold than on the deliberate, continuous, systematic and measurable improvement of the student experience, as well as on building reflexive praxis to develop quality cultures in institutions.

The following principles guided the institutional audit of Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT):

1. The primary responsibility for internal quality assurance rests with individual HEIs. Each institution is responsible for the establishment, implementation, maintenance, improvement and enhancement of its own quality management and assurance systems.
2. The uniqueness of each institution's size, shape, location, context and mission is recognised.
3. The value of institutional audits rests on the compilation of credible, contextually relevant and reliable information that is required for internal quality-related planning and self-evaluation, peer review and public reporting (for example, by publishing executive summaries).
4. Student experience, student engagement and participation and the student voice are central to an evaluation of an institution's quality management system.
5. The institutional audit is a peer-driven and evidence-based process to ensure that the HEQC and its audit Panel reports are transparent, informed and consistent.
6. Institutional audits are developmental and intent on supporting continuous quality improvement and enhancement.

¹ <https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/framework-institutional-audits-2021>

² <https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/manual-institutional-audits-2021>

³ <https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/quality-assurance-framework-qaf-higher-education-south-africa>

7. Institutional audits are required to balance their developmental character with the regulatory requirement that the CHE and the HEQC act on poor provisioning where institutions have no clear commitments, processes, practices or plans to improve.
8. Institutional audits are a key component of the HEQC's broad-based quality assurance mandate.

Aligned to international practice, the HEQC uses a review methodology consisting of an institutional self-evaluation report (SER), and an external peer review which verifies, triangulates and validates the institution's self-evaluation. The external peer review consists of a document analysis of the SER and institutional portfolio of evidence, as well as a site visit at which interviews are conducted with constituencies and physical infrastructure is visited.

This audit reports the outcomes of the institutional audit of the Mangosuthu University of Technology

A brief overview of Mangosuthu University of Technology

Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) was established as a Technikon in 1979, becoming a University of Technology (UoT) in 2007. MUT is now recognised as a well-established UoT mandated to provide higher education to its community, with a focus that has evolved from largely technical subjects to a broad curriculum covering Science, Engineering and Technology. The role of MUT as an anchor institution, contributing to the upliftment of the community, is central to the University's mission and vision. Its location in a peri-urban township of Durban means that MUT provides higher education opportunities to mainly historically disadvantaged students from its local community.

The University's focus is on the provision of advanced, technology-based programmes and industry- and business-oriented services, and it is committed to social redress and upliftment. The Strategic Plan for 2020-2025 presents the vision of MUT as 'a transforming, equitable, sustainable and academically excellent University of Technology'. The University distinguishes itself by its community engagement, its Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programmes, its linkages to industry and recognition for its contribution to developing skills that are key to societal change. Excellent community engagement is a priority in the MUT Strategic Plan and in its annual Implementation Plans.

The MUT has three faculties, namely, Management Sciences, Engineering, and Natural Sciences with the first being the largest (43%) and the last being the smallest (15%) in terms of student numbers. The demographics of MUT reflect the background of the community and are stable, with 50% female- and a large majority of African students, most of whom have isiZulu as their home language.

Most students at MUT are registered for undergraduate qualifications, and the University is seeking to increase the currently low number of postgraduate students, mostly enrolled for postgraduate diplomas. Similarly, the number of international students enrolled at MUT is very small in comparison with total numbers. The MUT strategic plan includes a plan for internationalisation, with increased numbers of international students and international linkages, an area recognised for future focus. MUT students come mostly from poor backgrounds and access to financial support (mostly through NSFAS) is of critical importance. Similarly, access to residence accommodation is important to the success of the MUT students.

The University has steadily increased its student enrolment by approximately 42 % over the past 10 years (in 2011 the number (headcount) of students was 10,286, and in 2020, the number of students was 14,651 (SER, Table 6)). Concomitant increases in the academic staff complement have meant that the staff: student ratio has changed only slightly (in 2011 this was 1:39 and in 2020 it was 1:42, based on FTEs (SER, Table 17)). The academic staff are quite diverse (72% black, 38% female, and 26% black and female. Twenty per cent of the academic staff hold PhDs, a number which MUT is seeking to increase through capacity building and support.

The research activity and productivity at MUT are growing steadily, through a focus on research capacity development, investment in selected niche and collaborative focus areas, and strategic appointment of emerging researchers and mentors.

Brief overview of the audit process

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER)

The MUT provided the Audit Panel with an SER covering all sections required by the CHE, and extensive documentation in support of the SER content. The Audit Panel were given access to the supporting documentation through an electronic repository of policies, reports etc. Additional documentation that was requested by the Panel was later added to the repository or sent electronically to the Panel. In the electronic version of the SER, hyperlinks to reference documents were found by the Panel to be particularly helpful.

Overall, the SER presents a comprehensive account of the institution and how it is functioning. The SER reflects a constructive approach by the team who compiled the report, and a generally positive attitude of the staff and students towards the efforts being made by the MUT leadership. The Panel were impressed by the commitment of the many members of MUT who they encountered, their willingness to interact with the Panel and their openness. The Panel appreciated the positive approaches and the sincere dedication of many colleagues to making MUT work and to contributing to its development.

The preparation of the SER was reported to be consultative, and the process was presented as being coherent, with the University community having been informed and consulted. The leadership reported that MUT had implemented a communication strategy to include all University stakeholders, students and the SRC. Meeting groups were provided with the SER prior to meetings. Views were solicited and accepted both orally, or written, in hard copy or email. However, the Panel did encounter some members of the groups interviewed who indicated that they had not been involved in the consultations, and were not aware of the content of the SER. This applied particularly to students, junior academics and support staff. In engaging with the SER, the Panel found it to be informative and descriptive. It was experienced as having limited opportunities for reflection, however. This lack of reflection was evident in the institution's self-assessment as in all its standards it rated itself as functional, despite the glaring challenges in the governance area where, at the time of the audit, there was an Administrator appointed by the Minister to assist the University to deal with governance issues, amongst other challenges.

Audit Panel Site Visit and Activities

The Audit Panel visited the campus of Mangosuthu University of Technology in Umlazi on November 14th and 15th, 2022. It is noted that the original plan to conduct in-person meetings for four days was curtailed

by the challenges that were being faced on the campus, mostly due to a lack of water supply and frequent power outages. During the week of the site visit, the Panel held 40 meeting sessions, of which 16 were in person, and the remainder were held virtually, online.

The Panel was pleased with the preparations and arrangements for the site visit. The Panel appreciated the willing cooperation of those members of MUT who assisted with the complex arrangements necessary to ensure adequate coverage of most sectors of the institution and observation of many of the facilities. In the face-to-face meetings, the turnout was impressive, and the engagements were cordial and honest most time.

The Work of the Panel

The Panel was provided with the SER in early October 2022, after the CHE had agreed to an extension for its submission, at the request of MUT. The Panel met several times prior to the site visit, initially for briefings by the CHE on the CHE's expectations and the role of the Panel. Subsequently, the Panel met for preliminary discussions on the SER and how best to conduct the review and to share the work to be done.

Following the site visit, the Panel members each undertook to draft sections of the audit report, and drafts were submitted to the Chairperson in mid-to-late December 2022. The collated draft report was completed for discussion in mid-February and a first draft was submitted to the CHE at the end of February 2023. A revised draft was submitted in April 2023, and a final version was submitted in July 2023.

The MUT SER is a well-thought-out report, with detailed attention having been paid to the quality of presentation and clarity in the information contained in it. The SER includes comprehensive coverage of information about the institution, in sections relating to the Standards as set out and required by the CHE. The live links to background documents and evidence of claims, which are included in the electronic version of the SER, were most helpful. Overall, the SER presents a constructive view of MUT. The Audit Panel appreciated the clear acknowledgement of areas requiring improvement, as well as areas where progress is being made.

The following is a summary of the Audit Panel's commendations and recommendations for the MUT.

FOCUS AREA 1: Governance, strategic planning, management and leadership support the core academic functions.

The four standards in Focus Area 1 concentrate on the role that an institution's *governance, strategic planning* (as contained in its *vision, mission and strategic goals*), *management and academic leadership* play in its quality management in order to enhance the likelihood of student success and to improve the quality of learning, teaching and research engagement, as well as accommodating the results of constructive, integrated community engagement.

STANDARD 1

The institution has a clearly stated vision and mission, and strategic goals which have been approved by appropriate governance structures, subject to comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

MUT has clearly expressed Mission and Vision statements, and a Strategic Plan for the period of 2020-2025, founded on previous plans and reviews. The Strategic Plan was developed through internal and stakeholder consultations which reached a significant proportion (although not all) of the staff and stakeholders. The Plan is centred on excellence in the spheres of teaching and learning, research and innovation; engagement in the community, as well as nationally and internationally, and on providing an enabling environment. The Plan recognises the need for growth in academic stature, inclusivity and community. Cross-cutting themes in the Plan identify objectives relating to financial sustainability, meeting expectations, improving internal processes and systems, and developing the culture and skills in the institution. The findings of the Audit Panel indicated that the Strategic Plan was generally understood and accepted across the University, although not all members of the staff are well acquainted with it.

The Panel recognises that MUT has sought to develop the current Strategic Plan through a consultative process, taking into account the recommendations made in previous reviews and assessments.

Current challenges in internal governance, management, and administration in the structures of the University have constrained the implementation of the Strategic Plan. These governance challenges have been sufficiently severe that MUT is currently under administration. The lack of stability in governance has led to challenges with respect to making long-term or permanent senior and executive appointments, and to finding suitable candidates for these roles. (See also Standard 4 below).

The sustainability of the institution, in relation to financial and human resources, is a serious challenge. The University has appointed external consultants to develop a “turnaround strategy” with the aim of making the institution more financially sound, in light of a culture where giving is not strong and third-stream income is difficult to attract. The University is severely under-resourced in terms of infrastructure, and facilities for teaching and learning and research. (See also Standard 6 below).

The MUT senior leadership team is acknowledged by the Panel for maintaining the vision of being an anchor in the community and serving the community and local business and industry needs. The leadership and staff are acknowledged for their collegiality and respect for the institution.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the University leadership should engage in a campaign of information-sharing and advocacy about the institutional goals expressed in the Strategic Plan across all sectors of the institution, in order to develop definitive plans for implementation of the Strategic Plan. Part of the implementation should be to effectively discuss and disseminate the Plan throughout the institution, at all levels in faculties and departments.
2. It is recommended that the University should strive for visibility, and should develop methods to measure the impact and effectiveness, of its stakeholder engagement activities.

STANDARD 2

The stated vision, mission and strategic goals align with national priorities and context (e.g. transformation, creating a skilled labour force, developing scarce skills areas and a critical citizenry, and contributing to the fulfilment of national goals as informed by the NDP and related national planning), as well as sectoral, regional, continental and global imperatives (e.g. Africa Vision 2063 or the Sustainable Development Goals).

Within the Higher Education environment, and in alignment with the NDP and national higher education policy, MUT seeks to position itself as a research-informed University offering “technological, career-driven educational programmes” and producing graduates with skills appropriate to national vocational and technical needs. In an environment of social and economic instability, MUT has aligned its Strategic Plan with national developments on the provision of free higher education for financially needy students.

MUT maintains its engagement with relevant stakeholders as a means to ensure that it provides skills development and training that will contribute to the needs of industry, business and the broad community. The relationship of MUT with potential employers of graduates is strong and positive, and the local industry actively employs MUT students. Employers place significant value on the WIL training programmes that MUT maintains. The Panel appreciates that MUT aligns its work with national priorities, especially with regard to skills training, innovation, and transformation.

MUT identifies with the need for national transformation and seeks to comply with national policy expectations related to transformation, differentiation in HE, scarce skills, SET, and the regulation of fees. The University has developed an approach to hybrid teaching and made the necessary technological changes to accommodate this.

MUT fosters innovation, seeking to equip its graduates with the skills required by the national workforce, and in alignment with the NDP goals for innovation. MUT has a qualification portfolio offering Advanced Diplomas, and Postgraduate Diplomas, in line with developments in the national Higher Education environment.

The University’s research endeavours seek to support impactful research in niche areas where it already has some expertise, and where there is opportunity for development. MUT has limited, but growing research activity, and limited facilities at present, as well as relatively few postgraduate students, but the research focus areas selected as priorities are relevant and can contribute value to the national and global sustainability agendas.

The University’s senior leadership identifies a challenge in the institutional culture of complacency and disinterest among staff and a lack of an internalised culture of learning among students. The Panel considered that the institutional culture needs to be improved, by seeking to emphasise “values, attitudes, styles of interaction, and collective memories of a University, known by those who work and study in the University environment through their lived experience (Steyn, 2007)” and by encouraging active participatory learning among students, with the aim of achieving excellence (as opposed to complacency) as a value among both staff and students.

Commendations

- a) The Panel commends MUT on the generally positive impression held by external stakeholders, particularly with regard to the quality of the students they encounter, for example in internship and WIL programmes.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the University leadership should engage in a campaign of information and advocacy amongst internal stakeholders about the positioning of MUT in the national higher education environment, to ensure awareness and buy-in at all levels in the institution.
4. It is recommended that MUT should focus on, and seek to improve, the institutional culture with respect to values, attitudes, styles of interaction and regard for the University, in order to improve active participatory learning among students, and to achieve excellence as a value (as opposed to complacency) among staff and students.

STANDARD 3

There is demonstrable strategic alignment between the institution's quality management system for core academic activities across all sites and modes of provision and its vision, mission and strategic goals, as well as its governance and management processes.

The University leadership (in the SER) describes alignment between the Quality Management System (QMS) and the government and management processes for the academic activities across the institution, with the Strategic Plan and key Result Indicators (KRIs) used to track progress in respect of the Vision and Mission, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each objective. The SER reports that quarterly-based annual planning, budgeting and reporting are conducted, and a Performance Scorecard is used.

The University acknowledges that its Strategic Plan does not adequately spell out the relationship between the University's goals and its quality management system, and further recognizes that delivery against the four strategic themes is critical to ensure the sustained success of the strategy.

There is generally a clear understanding of governance principles, and the roles and responsibilities of academic leadership, among the senior leaders (although not as clear among all staff). The MUT leadership recognizes the need for developing and improving the quality management capabilities, based on the 4 themes in the Strategic Plan. It is stated (in the SER) that there are Implementation Plans to improve processes and systems at the faculty and department level, but the development of the competencies to support these is a critical need. (This is discussed further in Focus Area 2 below).

MUT has an Annual Performance Plan (APP) for enrolment, expenditure, risks, etc., which is agreed with the DHET. Monitoring and evaluation against this APP are reported to the Council using a Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Framework. The senior leaders referred to an integrated planning and budgeting cycle, although there is little evidence of its implementation. Similarly, an Annual Institutional Operational Plan, which should outline key activities, budgets and responsibilities, is not being visibly implemented.

The University has a Risk Register and a Policy on delegation of authority, whereby authority and accountability are managed. Faculty QA committees and Senate committees are responsible for monitoring quality against these policies. Internal and external audits are reported as being conducted to ensure proper resource management and ethical leadership. However, the processes for addressing outcomes, and the implementation of improvement plans were not clear. It is of concern that the performance management system has not been extended to all staff and is only in place for the University Executive.

Staffing and appointments were reported to be conducted using appropriate systems and processes. However, the filling of vacancies, especially at senior levels, presents severe challenges, exacerbated by the recent instability in the Council and the University leadership. Training for staff includes leadership training for middle and senior management, and there is an acknowledged need for more capacity development in this area. The University supports research capacity development through strategic contract appointments.

Recommendations

5. It is recommended that the University should implement an integrated planning and budgeting cycle that is more effective and inclusive in its approach.
6. It is recommended that the University should embark on establishing a Performance Management system and processes which should be socialised and implemented at all levels.
7. It is recommended that MUT should embark on a University-wide review of the current governance and management policies and processes, with the aim of ensuring alignment and understanding at all levels.

STANDARD 4

There is a clear understanding of and demonstrable adherence to the different roles and responsibilities of the governance structures, management and academic leadership.

The roles and responsibilities of governance structures, management and leadership are set out in the MUT institutional governance environment, with a framework covering development, review, implementation and communication, with attention paid to audit, risk and compliance. In accordance with the Higher Education Act, the Senate of MUT is responsible for decision-making on academic matters, and there are Committees of the Senate established to deal with specific activities (Faculty Boards, Academic Planning, Community Engagement, Employment Equity and Skills Development, Health and Safety, Higher Degrees, Library and IT, and Research and Innovation). The senior management and academic leaders are strongly motivated to implement the Strategic Plan through these organisational structures.

The Executive Management Committee (EMC) reports to the Council with respect to implementation of the Strategic Plan and also with regard to management of the institution, financial matters, and the governance aspects of the academic project. At present, since MUT is under administration, the Administrator takes the role of the Council, and the EMC are reporting to the Administrator.

The Panel notes that the University leadership is working to ensure the stability of the core business under challenging conditions and with minimal disruptions, despite the University being under administration. MUT had been experiencing serious governance challenges before the intervention of the Minister.

The Executive Management Committee has reported that all the necessary governance and management structures are in place and that they are understood and managed by the leaders at the faculty and department levels. However, other groups indicate that in some departments, the policies are *not* adhered to, and certain internal stakeholders have expressed concern regarding internal processes and unequal practices in the processes of appointment and promotion.

Furthermore, concerns were expressed by union- and Convocation representatives as well as by staff, that the relationship between the (now dissolved) Council and other governance structures had led to discord in decision-making and the implementation of some decisions pertaining to governance, leadership and management. Assertions were expressed of undue influence being exercised by Council members on the Executive leadership with respect to decision-making and operational issues, and of challenges in respect of role clarification between Executive Management and the Council. Union representatives, in interviews, unreservedly voiced concerns about the need for clear criteria for the appointment of individuals to the University Council. Furthermore, it is critically important that appropriate appointments are made to the Council, especially since the Council then appoints the Senior Executive.

Related to the management challenges being experienced, the lack of stability in governance has meant that many senior appointments have been made in acting positions, which creates further instability and challenges for decision-making.

The Panel also heard in interviews with the governance departments that, despite the numerous policies and structures at faculty- and department levels, there are challenges with regard to implementation; most policies exist but the lack of accompanying processes and procedures impact areas such as procurement, academic administration, examination procedures, and staff appointments.

Recommendations

8. It is recommended that the University must address the issues which led to discord and potential interference by the Council in the operations of the institution, and to develop a plan, and policies, to ensure that the roles of all parties are respected and upheld.
9. It is recommended that the University must ensure that in setting up a new Council, the roles and responsibilities of Council members and those that support Council committees are clearly understood and clarified for the new Council; that properly appropriate appointments are made, and that the fulfilment of roles and responsibilities is monitored.
10. It is recommended that a review should be conducted of the breaches in adherence to policy in all departments, to investigate the concerns voiced with respect to appointment processes, and then to create mechanisms to enforce compliance with relevant human resource policies.

11. It is recommended that MUT should immediately address the challenges in implementing policy, by reviewing, developing and implementing improved processes, for procurement, academic administration, and examination processes.

FOCUS AREA 2: The design and implementation of the institutional quality management system supports the core academic functions.

The four standards in Focus Area 2 concentrate on how the *design and implementation of an integrated quality management system* in the institution enhances the likelihood of student success and improves the quality of learning, teaching, and research engagement, as well as accommodating the results of constructive, integrated community engagement within the context of the institution's mission.

STANDARD 5

A quality assurance system is in place, comprising a minimum of: Governance arrangements, Policies, Processes, procedures and plans, Instructional products, Measurement of impact, and Data management and utilisation.

In terms of **governance**, MUT has the Senate, and Senate subcommittees, including an Academic Planning Committee and Faculty Quality Assurance Committees, and all these structures were reported to be functioning effectively in the SER and interviews. However, in interviews with staff, the Audit Panel was appraised of a need for the integration and alignment of the activities of these various Senate committees. The SER indicates that there is a Quality Assurance Committee in each Faculty and that these committees engage with programme development and approval. In the Panel's engagements with staff and management, very little information was shared on the work of quality committees, especially in respect to monitoring of quality improvements that result from programme reviews.

The Audit Panel, in interviews with management and staff, was informed that MUT has a Quality Management Directorate (QMD) which submits its reports to the Senate, which has responsibility for ensuring that the QA function at the University has the necessary and appropriate policies to guide its work. There is also a review cycle for programmes which should follow a defined plan or cycle. The QMD takes responsibility for reporting on the outcomes of the various review processes, especially on academic programmes. The Panel was also appraised of the limitations and challenges faced by the QMD, especially how inadequate staffing impacted its ability to have full coverage of its plans and measure the impact of various policies and processes, and on being able to conduct research to enhance quality assurance systems at the University.

With respect to **policies**, the University (in its SER) states that the majority of policies have been developed in the last ten years, following the previous institutional audit. Clearly, MUT has a strong policy development culture, but this has led to a proliferation of policies that do not all have associated guidelines, processes, and procedures for implementation. The lack of an institutional strategy to deal with policy implementation is evident in certain key policies within the academic sphere, resulting in fragmentation that can adversely impact the quality of provisioning and the quality and integrity of the academic project. For example, in the Research and Innovation space, where most policies were reported to be adhered to, critical ones

(including the Higher Degrees Policy and the Intellectual Property Rights Policy) are not implemented due to a lack of capacity in the Research Directorate. MUT is aware of such limitations.

The Audit Panel considered that there is a need to review the QA function and its role at the University, and strongly advised that the University provide more adequate resourcing of the functions of both QA and Research Administration. The establishment of a Quality Committee is recommended, to enhance quality governance at the University, to ensure better monitoring of implementation of quality improvement plans, and to build capabilities for ensuring quality through the measurement of impact and the use of appropriate data.

With respect to **data management and utilisation**, the QMD is responsible for facilitating and developing reports, (such as student surveys of individual modules), but due to workload issues within QMD, most programme quality reviews were not being conducted, and the implementation of improvement plans is not being undertaken, despite their need to be part of the integrated process of planning and management.

Recommendations

12. It is recommended that the University should build on its capacity for policy development by ensuring that it develops a strategy for the institutionalisation, implementation, and integration of its existing quality-related policies in order to have a fully integrated quality management system.
13. It is recommended that the University should reconsider the placement and reporting of the QMD, and the possibility and the desirability of having a Quality Committee separate from the Academic Planning Committee.

STANDARD 6

Human, infrastructural, knowledge management, and financial resources support the delivery of the institution's core academic functions across all sites of provision, in alignment with the concomitant quality management system, in accordance with the institution's mission.

In contrast to MUT's account, in the SER, that the systems for human-, infrastructure-, and knowledge management and those for financial resources are generally adequate to support the delivery of MUT's core academic functions, the Audit Panel found that these claims were not supported in interviews with staff and management. Executive and senior management acknowledged that one of MUT's strategic risks is financial sustainability. This risk has impacted negatively on the provisioning and maintenance of available infrastructure. This in turn has impacted the delivery of the institution's core academic functions.

The current infrastructure, especially the physical infrastructure, is under tremendous strain. There are plans to bring new buildings to commissioning as soon as possible, which will bring some relief to overcrowding in teaching spaces and to the timetabling function at the University. The Audit Panel was informed about serious overcrowding in study places, laboratories, and lecture venues, due to insufficient large lecture venues to accommodate the growing numbers of students at the University. These pressures on infrastructure, staff, and students create a serious challenge to the provisioning of the core business in a manner that is concomitant with quality management systems.

The Audit Panel, drawing from the SER, the Improvement Plan (IP), and interviews, noted that the University is suffering from years of uncoordinated growth and planning. Teaching venues on the main campus, laboratories, library, and student accommodation, in many cases need urgent attention as the lack of maintenance and overcrowding has made some of these inhabitable and non-compliant with OHS standards.

The University needs to prioritise the provision of appropriate study spaces that promote social interaction and collaborative learning, ones that adhere to acceptable OHS and academic norms, across its campuses.

A severe shortage of teaching venues, laboratory space, and overcrowding in the library and other communal spaces has put the University under tremendous pressure and poses a risk to the financial sustainability of the University. Teaching staff have to duplicate classes, thus increasing their teaching time and unduly compromising other academic responsibilities such as research collaborations, research outputs, and their own acquisition of higher qualifications. The practice of paying staff extra for duplicated classes also impacts negatively on the financial sustainability of the University. Acceleration of technology-enhanced teaching and learning modalities is urgently required to ameliorate the workload pressures on staff and University finances, whilst staying true to being a face-to-face teaching University with a strong focus on WIL and technology.

The University will need to find ways to better manage its human and financial resources to optimise benefits. Currently, there is a dire need to review the model of teaching, the use of limited resources, staff workload, and remuneration and incentives to ensure financial sustainability and to optimise revenue generation from its assets, especially the residences.

The Panel recognises that MUT has improved its conceptualisation of student enrolment planning and its interdependencies, especially with respect to how it can contribute to MUT's sustainability. There is an emerging understanding that sustainability at MUT must focus on a holistic view, which includes attention to inputs, cost drivers, and outputs that will guarantee the sustainability and longevity of the institution. An enrolment plan that takes cognisance of several variables is needed to ensure that it is aligned with the quality management system, in accordance with the institution's mission.

Recommendations

14. It is recommended that the University should seek ways to better manage its financial resources to optimise the use of these in the delivery of the institution's core academic functions across all sites of provision.
15. It is recommended that the University should review the model of teaching, especially in relation to class duplications and staff workload, and should consider technology-enhanced teaching and training.
16. It is recommended that the University should find innovative ways to deploy its resources in relation to staff, including remuneration packages and incentives systems which could be modified to improve financial sustainability and to optimise revenue generation from its assets, including residences.

17. It is recommended that MUT should pay special attention to finding a suitable resource allocation model with respect to its space allocation and use it to protect students from inferior provision that could come from inadequate attention to personal health and safety matters.
18. It is recommended that the University should prioritise the provisioning of appropriate learning spaces that promote social interaction and collaborative learning, and ones that adhere to acceptable OHS norms, across its campuses.

STANDARD 7

Credible and reliable data (for example, on throughput and completion rates) are systematically captured, employed, and analysed as an integral part of the institutional quality management system so as to inform consistent and sustainable decision-making.

In the SER (p.92) MUT reports that the primary responsibility for the provision of management information rests with the Directorate of Institutional Planning and Research (DIPR). The Directorate consists of the Senior Director: Institutional Planning & Research; the Director: Monitoring, Evaluation & Research; the Deputy Director: Management Information; the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) Office which comprises the HEMIS Manager and the HEMIS Officer; the Director: Strategic Planning; the Timetable Officer and the Senior Secretary. With respect to *institutional data*, the University leadership (Executive and senior management) reports that their systems are current, but they concede that there is a culture within the University that mitigates against optimising the use of these resources.

The University also indicated in its SER (p.92) that a regular survey is conducted by the QMD, namely the Graduate Survey. This survey, conducted among graduates at the MUT graduation ceremony, elicits the views, opinions, and experiences of graduates with a view to improving the provision of services by the University. Although the 2020 survey was conducted online as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it still achieved a response rate of 71% of the graduates. The survey indicated that 59% of the 2020 graduating cohort were unemployed at the time of graduation, while 21% were studying further. Of the participants, 89% were satisfied with their overall experience at MUT and 85% would recommend MUT to prospective students.

The University further claims in its SER (p.92) that in some instances, the University partners with other institutions, such as the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of the Free State, to participate in surveys such as the Beginning University Survey of Student Engagement (BUSSE). It indicates the academic characteristics of the students, including their high school engagement with quantitative reasoning and learning strategies, and expected first-year academic engagement and performance.

The DIPR provides a range of reports on pass rates, students at risk, throughput rates, cohort analysis reports, and graduation analysis that can be used by academic staff and senior management, to monitor student success and track trends over time. In interviews, it was evident that there had been several challenges that could have been averted if there had been a systematic interrogation of available data; these challenges included the placement of students in WIL, which impacted negatively on graduation rates in selected disciplines at the University. Interviews assisted the Panel to gain insights on how data was used by the University.

The Audit Panel urges the University to have focused sessions where data is interrogated in order to better understand its students and their challenges and to mount appropriate academic and social interventions to promote greater access with success. The Panel notes that there is a need to develop capability for predictive analytics and to make greater use of student analytics in decision-making. This shift might have staffing and skills implications that will need to be factored into future planning. The Audit Panel is pleased to note that the University also acknowledges this as an area of development in interviews and in its documentation.

Recommendations

19. It is recommended that the University should optimise the use of available data to make evidence-based decisions.
20. It is recommended that the University conduct focused sessions to review data in order to better understand its students and their challenges and to develop appropriate academic and social interventions to promote greater access and success.
21. It is recommended that the University engage with its enrolment figures to ensure that all students are allocated opportunities to be placed within the industry and to reduce the waiting periods for student placements.

STANDARD 8

Systems and processes monitor the institution's capacity for quality management, based on the evidence gathered

The University claims to have systems to gather data from a variety of sources to inform quality reflections and reporting, such as programme-review reports, internal audit reports, module surveys, results of the audits of test mark changes, graduate surveys, examination paper moderation, and monitoring of security measures at the Examination Centre. The University also claims to have the capacity to use available reports on these various quality management processes to help decision-makers to identify and respond to successes and challenges, especially programme-review processes. Committees (such as Faculty Boards, Senate, and Academic Planning Committee) were reported to consider commissioned reports.

In response to this standard, the University claims in SER, p 98 that it has systems and processes in place to monitor its capacity for quality management, and these assist it in maintaining quality output during times of disruption. While information is generally available on the HEDA system to inform decision-making, this could be more widely engaged with, and plans are in place to enhance the system's usability and to foster staff awareness of its benefits. Regular meetings of statutory structures provide space for robust academic discussion and debate between staff members, and between staff and students, on aspects of delivery of the core academic functions. Initiatives by the Student Affairs Division and TLDC to encourage greater student participation in meetings are hailed as vital to achieving broader engagement on quality issues.

Major beneficiaries of these systems are the professional programmes as these are basic requirements for the analysis of student success rates and for determining the quality of provisioning and support that is needed. These reports have assisted the University to gain professional accreditation for all its engineering

programmes. There is also an acknowledgment that these reports have assisted in addressing the backlog in placement of students in WIL that was cited as having an impact on throughput rates and graduation rates as expressed in standard 7 discussions of this report.

In interviews with staff and the QMD, it was acknowledged that one of the areas for development is to optimise the use of surveys to translate into quality improvements. The University acknowledges that low rates of participation in surveys and the lack of feedback to participants as militating against the desired outcomes in this standard. The Audit Panel acknowledges that the University has systems and processes in place for monitoring the capacity for quality management and encourages the University to optimise its feedback mechanisms to assist in developing a quality culture of continuous improvements.

Recommendations

22. It is recommended that MUT should build on its internal capacity to ensure that stakeholders within the University can use the available systems and processes to monitor the institutional capacity for quality management, based on the evidence gathered.
23. It is recommended that MUT should make provision for impact measurement and decision-making through the use of data and information from the QMD, Internal Audit, Risk and Compliance, Teaching and Learning Development Committee, and other relevant divisions and departments.

FOCUS AREA 3: *The coherence and integration of the institutional quality management system supports the core academic functions.*

The four standards in Focus Area 3 concentrate on the coherence and integration of the various components comprising the institutional quality management system and on how these work in concert to support the likelihood of student success and improve the quality of learning, teaching and research engagement, as well as accommodating the results of constructive integrated community engagement in accordance with the institution's mission.

STANDARD 9

An evidence-based coherent, reasonable, functional, and meaningfully structured relationship exists between all components of the institutional quality management system.

MUT claims to have a “reasonable and functional reporting framework, [with] a regular schedule of **policy renewal, programme reviews, and internal audits**. This framework and the attendant reviews are used to identify risks that could impede the additional support offered, as well as the need to introduce any new developments and enhancements to a particular function”. A significant number of policies have been developed or updated in the last ten years, following the previous institutional audit. While MUT has more than 100 policies, in some departments, policies and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have not been fully developed. While policies are the backbone of a quality assurance system, the deficiencies in terms of policy implementation are concerning, as are the shortcomings in evaluating effectiveness, and in the conduct of policy awareness workshops.

The University needs to conduct regular assessments of the effectiveness of existing policies. It remains unclear whether there is a governance framework on policy development and reviews, that outlines the rationale, processes, and procedures to be followed when a policy is developed or reviewed.

The QMD runs quality assurance processes in the form of trail audits, student surveys, graduate surveys, programme reviews, and evaluation of security at the exams section. The QMD also takes responsibility to monitor improvement plans emanating from quality assurance processes, through academic statutory meetings. It emerged in Audit Panel discussions, that members of the Faculty Quality Committees and Academic Planning Committee may need to be capacitated further to empower them to conduct rigorous monitoring and evaluation of QIPs. It is recommended that the EMC should provide additional resources and support to QMD.

It is a concern that the compliance function of the University has been seemingly neglected and undermined, and as such it is not deemed to be an effective quality assurance tool. There is a plan to deal with non-compliance with policy requirements, and the compliance function was recently moved to the Registrar's office, where a compliance unit would be established, and a director appointed.

The Audit, Risk, and Compliance Directorate routinely monitors risks in the various portfolios, departments, and directorates. It conducts independent internal risk-based audits to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of internal processes and controls, and audited departments are expected to compile improvement plans and to report regularly on their progress.

Recommendations:

24. It is recommended that the University develop an integrated IQMS framework and an institutional Quality Strategy that demonstrates the coherence and integration between institutional, faculty, and support unit subsystems. This framework should assist MUT to determine the impact, efficiency, and effectiveness of its QMS.
25. It is recommended that the University should seek mechanisms to strengthen the quality of support provided by academic support units and the compliance function.
26. It is recommended that the University should develop an effective monitoring system for improvement plans emanating from internal and external quality assurance processes.
27. It is recommended that the University should find ways to ensure that the findings of student-, graduate- and employer surveys are incorporated to enhance the quality of programmes and services offered.
28. It is recommended that the University develop and implement promotions policies and processes for all staff, including support staff.

STANDARD 10

Evidence-based regular and dedicated governance and management oversight of the quality assurance system exists.

The University states in the SER, that “Performance management (PM) agreements commit Executive Management to deliver against allocated quality responsibilities, and this is monitored by the Council (in the case of the VC) or the VC (in the case of the DVCs and Registrar)”, and “the Quality Assurance Policy attaches specific quality management responsibilities to each layer of the organisation, from Senate (the highest academic body responsible for quality) to lecturer level”. It was also noted that “staff below P3 level are not currently held to account by a formal performance contract, although discussions are in progress on this front, in line with the Performance Management and Development Framework”. Senior academics who were interviewed unanimously agreed that there was no performance management system at MUT. In addition, the unions were consulted on PM and were concerned that it would be initiated only at senior levels. It was established through interaction with various other stakeholders that the Performance Management and Development Framework has not been fully implemented.

It is noted that no promotion policy is in place for non-academic or support staff and that academic staff do not have signed performance contracts and have never been acquainted with the PMS. A Workload Model (WLM) was reported to exist but is not implemented across the institution, and consequently, academic staff indicated that they have difficulty managing the burden of teaching, research, and administration. Concerns were expressed regarding consultation and the implementation of the Workload Mode, with only some staff indicating that they had been consulted. Union members reported that they had pointed out flaws with the model, but these were not addressed (See also Standard 11).

At MUT, good practice is celebrated through awards in each of the three core academic areas of teaching and learning, distinction in research, and community engagement. Good performance is acknowledged through the Employer Excellence Awards and recognition of the highest achieving students in each faculty. However, more innovative ways of celebrating students’ good practice are needed, including recognition of good practice in non-academic areas of student experience.

With regard to Executive Management regularly being held to account for aspects of quality management, while the Senate is the highest decision-making structure for academic matters, to improve accountability and governance of QMS, there is a need for a separate Senate subcommittee that would be specifically mandated to provide oversight on the quality assurance framework, systems, and policies of the University. The Executive Management is regularly held to account for aspects of quality assurance by the Senate, which serves as the highest decision-making structure for academic matters. It would nevertheless improve quality management accountability if there were a separate Senate sub-committee mandated specifically to oversee the efficient implementation of the quality assurance framework, its related policies, and the systems required to manage the University’s quality assurance commitments.

Recommendations

29. It is recommended that the University should implement its performance management agreements at all functional levels.

30. It is recommended that the University should develop a Promotion Policy for non-academic staff.
31. It is recommended that the University should embark on an effective and speedy implementation of grievance procedures.
32. It is recommended that the University should find more innovative ways of celebrating students' good practices, including recognition of good practices in non-academic areas of student experience.
33. It is recommended that the University should establish an Institutional Quality Assurance Committee as either a Senate Committee or a joint committee of the Senate and Council.

STANDARD 11

Planning and processes exist for the reasonable and functional allocation of resources to all components of the institutional quality management system.

There is no formal Resource Allocation Model (RAM) used at MUT or a financial growth strategy employed; budget allocation is done annually, taking into consideration the strategic goals for 2020-2025, and a zero-based budgeting approach is used. Departments are invited to make submissions for annual plans. The budgeting process for directorates had been somewhat inconsistent, with some directorates reporting uneven experiences.

Financial sustainability remains a high risk due to the high reliance on the DHET subsidy, limited alternative financial resources, and enormous student debt.

Regarding staffing resources, the Panel was informed of low staff morale due to instability in governance, management, and leadership, and fatigue due to work overload. It remains unclear how much work was done to prepare for the roll-out of the Workload Model (WLM) and to implement it. It is further acknowledged that the model requires a change management strategy to ensure buy-in and its full implementation. However, there is a process underway to fill the vacant positions, and this may contribute to improved staff morale and reduced work overload.

Recommendations

34. It is recommended that the University urgently develop a resource allocation model that can be used by MUT to strengthen its budget consultations at the operating unit levels and must engage in extensive and intensive consultation regarding its resource allocation.
35. It is recommended that the University resolve the inconsistencies in approval procedures in certain departments so as not to impact service delivery.
36. It is recommended that the University must urgently finalise and roll out the Workload Model (WLM) to all departments.

STANDARD 12

The quality assurance system achieves its purpose efficiently and effectively.

The University reports in the SER that there are clear lines of responsibility for the planning and allocation of resources to ensure that the strategic goals of the University are factored into the APP and operational plan, with regular feedback on the utilisation of financial, human, and infrastructural resources, as per the schedules in the Planning, Monitoring and Reporting Framework, provided to the EMC.

Quality assurance processes are seen generally to be the responsibility of the Quality Management Directorate (QMD) and it is agreed that there is a need to institutionalise a quality culture in such a way that every functional unit and all stakeholders see quality as their responsibility. Administrative staff view quality assurance as an academic exercise, specifically applicable to the teaching and learning portfolio.

The work of the QMD or quality function seems to be confined to the T&L portfolio, reporting to the DVC: T&L, with its core functions being quality assurance oriented (not quality management). Quality functions are not extended to other strategic areas such as Research, Community Engagement and Support. This approach may constrain the strategic role and cross-cutting purpose of the quality management function. It is strongly recommended that the University consider having the function report to the office of the Vice-Chancellor.

Human resource challenges have been noted in the QMD, but the newly approved additional positions will benefit the QMD and the University. Although resources are constrained at the University, MUT requires a total reorganisation and resourcing of the quality function and unit.

In performance management at the University, (see also standards 8 and 10 above) Performance Management Agreements have only been implemented at the executive management level, and not at lower levels of management and operations; this may have resulted in the weakening of accountability and quality management systems. The performance of academic staff is managed indirectly via academic staff promotion procedures, based on excellence in three core functional areas. Academic staff expressed views that there was no performance management system implemented and therefore no clarity on expectations for promotion.

Recommendation

37. It is recommended that the University should rethink and reorganise its quality management function by placing the QMD in the Office of the Vice-Chancellor to strengthen its role as the custodian of the quality assurance function, and to enable the quality function to be more broadly institutionalised, as opposed to its current narrow focus on the T&L portfolio.

FOCUS AREA 4: Curriculum development, learning, and teaching support the likelihood of student success.

The four standards in Focus Area 3 concentrate on the coherence and integration of the various components comprising the institutional quality management system and on how these work in concert to

support the likelihood of student success and improve the quality of learning, teaching and research engagement, as well as accommodating the results of constructive integrated community engagement in accordance with the institution's mission.

STANDARD 13

An effective institutional system for programme design, approval, delivery, management, and review is in place.

The University reports that it has clear procedures for programme design and development, including approval and review, and that programme design and revision go through a rigorous quality assurance process as summarised in the Process Flow (outlined in the SER), which complements the Programme Development Policy.

MUT claims to keep its programmes up to date, relevant, and coherent, with internal reviews carried out every five years to ensure compliance with relevant policies and guidelines such as the Learning Assessment and Moderation Policy, the Examinations Policy, and the Programme Review Policy. The reviews also provide an opportunity for the University to benchmark its practice against that of other universities nationally, to identify areas of good practice and those requiring improvement. These processes seem to be followed appropriately, with oversight of the Senate and its sub committees.

In addition, some programmes are reviewed every four to five years as dictated by professional bodies. Particular attention is paid to programmes which require accreditation by professional bodies. The Panel notes that MUT has attained full accreditation for its Engineering programmes in departments which have recently undergone review. It was also noted that the programmes which do not require professional accreditation tend to be given lower priority, in relation to review, than those that do. The Panel recommends that *all* programmes should be reviewed with the same regularity and prioritisation.

Of concern is the poor state of infrastructure which impacts directly the quality of the student experience. New building projects being completed will help to address this, in part. However, attention to health and safety standards in learning facilities is required.

Recommendations

38. It is recommended that the University should pay equal attention to the review of programmes that are not accredited by professional bodies as to those that are, in order to ensure that students do not receive inferior education.
39. It is recommended that the University should urgently consider improving the learning environment and the infrastructure set to make it conducive for the students' learning endeavours.
40. It is recommended that the University should intensify the training of staff and students in appropriate technologies to enable them to engage, using relevant tools, to access teaching and learning in a post-COVID -19 context.

41. It is recommended that the University should pay attention to securing adequately qualified experts in all subjects taught, with the necessary capability and an understanding of the associated pedagogy and suitable examination approaches, as a foundation for delivering quality education.

STANDARD 14

There is evidence-based engagement at various institutional levels, among staff, and among staff and students, with: a. curriculum transformation, curriculum reform and renewal; b. learning and teaching innovation; and c. the role of technology (1) in the curriculum, (2) in the world of work, and (3) in society in general.

Evidence-based engagement with staff and students at various levels is conducted through surveys as the main instrument. However, definitive conclusions are difficult to draw, due to low responses, which in turn may be due to a lack of timely feedback after the surveys. This is an area for focused attention by the University, to ensure feedback on the curriculum, teaching and learning innovations, student progress, and perceptions of the society on MUT qualifications.

There is a need for more effective institution-wide consultation, to address inadequacies in dealing with current issues, and the available engagements not meeting quality delivery needs. For the student body, there is an apparent gap in how students perceive the overload of modules, which then impacts the quality of their teaching and learning experience. More deliberate engagement with students is required, for example on module workloads, and the implementation of extended programmes.

The University is moving towards a 'remote multimodal' delivery model of teaching and learning, and the use of technology in teaching spaces is being developed. However, the operationalisation of contact between staff and students does not seem to support curriculum reform and renewal, as infrastructure is not adequate for the role of technology to be embraced. This has negative implications for the current curriculum, which should ensure graduates are ready for evolving places of work and engaged in the delivery of the needed social compact in the community e.g. through entrepreneurship.

With respect to language policy, while efforts are being made to increase bilingualism in instruction and administration, MUT is still in the early stages of formulating an implementation plan for the Language Policy.

Commendation

- b) The Panel commends MUT for the Teach-with-technology spaces which have been established at the University and which promise to bring the needed transformation in the teaching and learning space.

Recommendations

42. It is recommended that the University should find innovative ways of ensuring that its students provide the required feedback on the curriculum, experiences, and world of work, to assist the University in making the required improvements in curriculum delivery and renewal.

43. It is recommended that the University find ways of engaging more deliberately with students on issues such as module workloads to ensure better success.
44. It is recommended that the University should expand teaching technology across the faculties, and ensure adequate staff training, to enhance the design and delivery of an up-to-date curriculum which has socio-economic impact.

STANDARD 15

The students' exposure to learning and teaching at the institution, across all sites and modes of provision, is experienced as positive and enabling of their success.

MUT reports that it has systems for measuring student success and that it monitors students' experience as a key contributor to that success and responds to the feedback it receives. The University considers how a sense of belonging is fostered among students, how disruptions are managed with due regard to students' experience, and lastly, how the contribution of staff to the student experience is managed and enhanced. Generally, students expressed some satisfaction.

Postgraduate students expressed satisfaction with respect to the importance of their research projects and their involvement in UG support at the University. This is encouraged in support of the academic core areas. The resourcing of the training of postgraduate students at MUT is a major challenge, considering the financial support, infrastructure for research, and general support systems needed for higher degree candidates. Collaboration with nearby institutions helps to provide a conducive environment for postgraduate activities. The University needs to capacitate post-graduate education as an area of growth, especially given the new leadership at various levels and the vision expressed by this group of leaders.

The undergraduate student experience is supported through a First Year Experience Programme, and this is evaluated through a survey. This support programme is well received. Extended programmes are also well-regarded by the students, to the extent that those not in extended programmes feel disadvantaged. The notion of extended programmes could be broadened at the University to increase interest and numbers, especially in the sciences.

The University is aware of the importance of setting up a student's ombudsman office which would be important in dealing with student issues, it will be imperative that such an office is appropriately capacitated to ensure positive experiences of the learner journey at MUT.

Recommendations

45. It is recommended that the University should engage in a more deliberate drive to capacitate and resource postgraduate growth as part of the growth strategy and vision expressed by the University leadership.
46. It is recommended that the University find ways to improve the safety of the students in general but also in residences where students live and study.

47. It is recommended that the University should establish and capacitate a fully functional ombudsman office to ensure that students matters are fairly dealt with when it comes to their judicial wellbeing at the University.

48. It is recommended that the University should conduct a thorough investigation into – and implementation of – extended programmes across a wider range of offerings especially in the science-related programmes in a bid to enhance student access and success.

STANDARD 16

Institutions engage with and reflect on the employability of their graduates in a changing world.

MUT reports that it tracks graduate employability on an annual basis, through the annual Graduate Survey conducted by the QMD, and measures graduates' levels of employment, self-employment, and unemployment. Most recent data show the unemployment rate for the graduating cohort of 2020 was 59%, the majority being National Diploma graduates. The main reason was cited as a lack of work opportunities, followed by a lack of work related to the study field. Only 21% of survey participants were studying further.

Key recommendations (based on the findings of the 2020 Graduate Survey) were that the University should strengthen its entrepreneurship development drive, interrogate the factors contributing to high unemployment among its graduates, and develop relevant advanced diplomas and postgraduate programmes to enable more graduates to engage in postgraduate study.

Realising the very high levels of unemployment in the immediate local community, entrepreneurship has been introduced as a general core module to prepare students for alternatives to regular employment, an excellent step aligned to the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education by the HE department. The Panel recognises and appreciates that the University has a dedicated staff member focusing on entrepreneurship to prepare students for alternatives to regular employment.

The current employers of graduates express high levels of satisfaction with the quality of graduates from MUT and they are extensively engaged in absorption of graduates. This positive perception should be given more deliberate attention, to enhance employability further. The University is commended for the high levels of employer satisfaction with the quality of graduates and for focusing on entrepreneurship as a means to prepare students for alternatives to regular employment.

Alumni activities underpin the approach the University takes to engage with graduates after they leave the University, and to maintain connections that would be mutually beneficial, including exploring graduate employability. Although well-engaged alumni are commendable, clear lines of demarcation are necessary to avoid overreach of responsibility.

Commendation

- c) The Panel commends MUT for engendering high levels of satisfaction amongst employers, with respect to the quality of graduates and its extensive engagement with the absorption of graduates, is a positive.

Recommendation

49. It is recommended that MUT should develop and use an appropriate tool to ascertain the pace of absorption of graduates into employment.

CONCLUSION

The findings of Institutional Audit of the Mangosuthu University of Technology have shown that the University has some functional areas where the CHE standards are met, and the policies, systems, and processes are operating satisfactorily. This applies mainly to the presence of the institutional mission, vision, and strategic plan, and the alignment of activities with these. It also applies to the relationship of the University with some external stakeholders, such as employers of graduates. However, there are several areas where there are challenges, where the quality standards are not being met, where practices do not align with policy, and where substantial improvement is required.

The Audit Panel also concluded that for standard 4, which relates to adherence to the respective roles and responsibilities of the governance structures, management, and leadership, there are serious concerns. Recommendations are made that appointments to the Council and the Senior Executive should be made by adhering strictly to the criteria appropriate and in terms of the relevant governance rules and policies.

Of major concern is the quality of the infrastructure of the University, which has not been satisfactorily maintained and has not grown to accommodate increasing numbers of students and staff. Also of serious concern is the financial standing of the institution, where resources seem to be inadequate, and no clear solution is being sought or applied.

On a positive note, the staff and students of MUT are generally supportive of the institution and are working collegially and with dedication.