

Institutional feedback report

Name of Institution	University of Pretoria
Date of institutional visit	18 February 2016
Names of peer reviewers	Professor Usuf Chikte Dr Florence Southway-Ajulu
Additional reviewer	Professor Elizabeth de Kadt
Name of CHE person involved in the visit	Professor Diane Grayson
Date draft report submitted to institution	10 February 2017
Date of final report	19 July 2017

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO QEP PEER REVIEWER REPORTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Pretoria (UP) is a multi-campus institution, comprising the campus at Hatfield, with five other campuses spread across Pretoria and the Gordon Institute of Business Science located in Illovo, Johannesburg. The Mamelodi Campus, almost 20 km from Hatfield, is devoted to extended programmes and community engagement. The Faculties of Education, Health Sciences and Veterinary Sciences are based on their specific campuses. The academic operations are structured around nine faculties, which offer a wide range of qualifications, from general formative degrees to professional qualifications, including 'scarce skills' disciplines. The University is currently a dual medium university, with tuition in almost all undergraduate programmes offered in both English and Afrikaans, at least at first-year level.

The University is one of South Africa's research intensive universities and has made a deliberate effort to foreground research in all aspects of the institution. This has included, since 2012, a strong focus on inquiry-based curricula for undergraduate students. Currently the University enrolment stands at over 50 000 students. Data available indicate that the University has an undergraduate retention rate of over 70%, which is above the national average. This suggests that the numerous strategies in place for effective teaching and learning and student success are having a positive impact.

The institution is centrally managed, with each of the four vice principals being responsible for specific portfolios and supported by the deans of the nine faculties and executive directors. There is some degree of devolution to faculties, but not at the expense of alignment of faculty and institutional goals and plans. The management of the institution is guided by the long-term strategic plan, UP 2025, and accompanying Academic Plan, which includes a focus on enhancing the quality of teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The University has identified specific drivers for student success. These include for example, curriculum issues and support provided by staff, which are a responsibility of each faculty and led by a deputy dean or head for teaching and learning. It is also clear that a number of teaching and learning initiatives emanate from faculties, which are then discussed at all levels of the University, including Senate and Council. It is therefore evident that student experience and success are central to University activities.

The institution seeks to be evidence-based in its planning processes and collects considerable evidence and data of various types. In analysis of data, the Department for Education Innovation (DEI) and the Bureau for Institutional Research and Planning (BIRAP) in the Department of Institutional Planning (IP) play a crucial role. A new position of DVC: Institutional Planning was created in 2014 to further strengthen these efforts. Most recently, the institution has begun to focus on learning analytics in an effort to understand more clearly the factors that impact on student retention and student success.

In 2014 the University Council approved a hybrid model for teaching and learning (combining both contact sessions and e-learning).

In its submissions the University indicated its strong support for the QEP process, in terms of UP's institutional commitment to self-reflexivity, a strong belief in the QEP's core principles, and the QEP's focus on enhancement, not only of individual institutions, but of the sector. It was indicated that certain activities included in the QEP had positively assisted the University with its thinking, and enhanced participation of a wide sector of the institution, such as the national workshop on assessing and rewarding academics as teachers and the QEP student workshops, particularly the workshop held in 2015.

The University situated the QEP exercise within its UP 2025 strategic plan, to enhance activities that are already in the strategic plan. Two of the strategic goals, "To pursue excellence in teaching and learning," and "To increase access throughput and diversity," are directed aligned with the goals of the QEP. However, for an institution of this size, it was important to obtain buy-in for the process across the university, from deans to the wider University body. The University achieved this buy-in through setting up a project team under the leadership of the Vice Principal: Academic, with a project manager and coordinator at University level. Teams were then set up to address each of the QEP focus areas. The panel commended the University on the composition of these teams, which were chaired by deputy deans for teaching and learning and included a diverse range of staff, with each team also including the institutional QEP project manager and project coordinator. Such a composition enabled a wide range of colleagues to be included in the reflection on the institution's engagement with the QEP focus areas and the development of the QEP report, which further ensured buy-in. Students were also included on each team. The panel noted that this level of buy-in could assist in carrying the University through future projects. Another noteworthy point is that the presence of the project manager and project coordinator in each team promoted continuity, coherence and a holistic approach.

The reflection and preparation of the comprehensive first report appear to have been strongly driven by this team effort, with the report compiled from notes arising from the team discussions, followed by an iterative process for comments and additions to the report, which was then circulated among the teams. The student voice was provided by the Student Representative Council (SRC) Academic Officer and President as well as nominees from Faculty Houses, undergraduates and postgraduates. UP's interest in developmental collaboration with other HE institutions was repeatedly expressed in the report, which is noteworthy.

The final report was far less comprehensive, primarily due to a misunderstanding of what was required in this report. However, it was noted during the final meeting with senior management that, clearly, UP had undertaken many improvements which had not been reflected in the final report, but which the panel would nevertheless be able to reflect in the peer reviewer report owing to the excellent quality of the interviews and the enthusiasm of the participating staff.

It should be borne in mind that in late 2015, UP was dealing with serious student protests. The institution's commitment to maintaining the teaching programme and academic

activities during these difficult times is noted with appreciation. Interestingly, the university used this challenge as an opportunity to increase the use of blended learning.

2. FOCUS AREA 1: ENHANCING ACADEMICS AS TEACHERS

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

THE INSTITUTION'S STRENGTHS

UP 2025 addresses this focus area, under Goal 4, by means of the strategy 'providing targeted development and support for staff'.

UP has in place a number of structures developed over many years, which support this focus area. A key structure is the Department of Education Innovation (DEI), which is responsible for staff development, student academic development and the Learning Management System (LMS), among other areas, and which supports teaching and learning in general. The department is headed by a director and falls under the Vice Principal (VP): Academic. The positioning of this office within the VP's office reflects the importance the University has placed on the activities of this office.

University structures that support teaching and learning include: a Senate Teaching and Learning Committee, chaired by the VP: Academic; a deputy dean or head for teaching and learning in each faculty and faculty and departmental teaching and learning committees. Staff development is supported by a comprehensive suite of policies relating to appointment and promotion of staff and staff development. Developmental interventions take place both at institutional and at faculty levels. An institutional Teaching and Learning Framework is available on the staff intranet.

The University approaches professional development through both formal and non-formal training, and provides various resources to staff, including:

- Formal studies where academic staff are encouraged to enrol for the PGCHE offered by the Faculty of Education, and open to all UP staff, as well as to staff from neighbouring institutions. An interesting aspect of this PGCHE is that the final assessment is a choice of writing a journal article or presenting a paper at a conference, which contributes to enhancing research productivity, and which also embeds the learning within the relevant discipline. During the past five years, more than 50 members of UP staff have graduated from the PGCHE.
- Non-formal training involves staff being motivated through their performance agreement to attend courses offered within the University or outside; courses for new lecturers are given priority. Institutional 'Priority programmes' and Faculty programmes are made available for free. Recently, there has been a focus on inquiry-based learning. The University has also initiated a process of inviting outside education experts who work within faculties and thereby provide context-specific

interventions, which are found to be very useful. Symposia and colloquia are also organised, e.g. for staff teaching in extended degree programmes, funded by the DHET Foundational Provision Grant.

As a research institution, research in teaching and learning is encouraged, as evidenced by presentations at internal forums such as the Science Teaching and Learning Forum (SCITAL) in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences and University-supported presentations at national conferences of the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa (HELTASA). Funding for SOTL initiatives is made available from DHET's Teaching Development Grant.

The academic staff promotion policy was amended in 2010 to include some focus on teaching, and the use of portfolios of evidence to evaluate teaching was approved. This has been implemented differentially by Faculties, but generally includes consideration of student evaluations and peer review.

THE APPROACH TAKEN TO IMPROVEMENT

Improvement in this focus area has been underpinned by the relevant strategic goals from UP 2025, namely, to pursue excellence in teaching and learning and increase access, throughput and diversity, and many ongoing initiatives, begun before the inception of the QEP, have continued. While generic, institution-wide initiatives have been maintained, there has, in general, been a shift towards approaches that allow for more Faculty-specific initiatives (even when driven by DEI), which means that improvements are being embedded, to a greater extent, in the disciplines. This has included the several conferences and workshops convened by the University, where there is an opportunity for UP academics to share their practice, and where international education experts both share their expertise and work with individual faculties in specific areas. DEI has clearly played a leadership role. Individual faculties, too, have initiated some important improvements, often in collaboration with DEI. The institution has also continued its ongoing processes of collecting data relating to this focus area, for a variety of purposes, including gauging effectiveness and participation.

From the second report and discussions, it is apparent that there has also been some policy development or revision, for instance around performance appraisal and staff workloads, although these policies have not necessarily been rolled out consistently across all faculties yet.

IMPROVEMENTS UNDERTAKEN AND PROGRESS MADE

Professional development

While the formal PGCHE programme has continued, the non-formal Priority programmes (delivered by DEI and funded by the Skills Levy), have expanded to include current institutional priority areas: training in mobile and web technology, inquiry-based learning, marking (assessment) and curriculum development. However, management and the DEI do

not consider staff attendance at these programmes to be satisfactory, which is attributed to the heavy workloads experienced by staff. It is noted that some faculties utilise these programmes more than others.

DEI received much praise in the interviews, as being supportive, available and always seeking to meet faculties' specific needs. A significant adjustment in their work has been a change from the central training of individual staff members, who then take what they have learnt back to their department for implementation in what may be a rather hostile or uninterested environment, to training or exposing whole departments to an area identified as needing attention, for example assessment. This allows a topic to be addressed by DEI at departmental level. Subsequently, after a phase in which the department works on its own, another intervention session with DEI can then review the work done.

It was noted in the interviews that the institution is seeking to move from the long-standing *ad hoc* approach to skills development towards a much more structured approach, by means of reporting of initiatives, including training undertaken in faculties, to a central Skills Development Committee. This will allow for centralized discussion around training, and for further training to draw on the feedback received. It was unclear to the panel whether UP has an overarching framework for professional development, to drive and shape improvements.

In line with UP's new hybrid model for teaching, 2015 saw a strong focus on technology in support of teaching and learning. Here an interestingly structured overarching developmental programme sought to maximise participation. The year was initiated by a teaching and learning conference: 'Flexible Futures: Shaping e-learning for higher education', with both international input and contributions by UP staff with experience in online programmes. Following a series of workshops during the year, the programme was concluded by a second conference in November, 'Flexible Futures: Shaping e-learning for the University of Pretoria', where sessions were structured in a combination of online days and one contact day, and participants thereby experienced actual online learning, including the use of social media. During the year discussions around the hybrid model were taken into the faculties for faculty-specific consideration and contextualisation. In the interviews, several Faculties (Law, Health Sciences, EMS, Education) mentioned growing interest on the part of their staff.

The Faculty of Health Sciences, for example, noted a growing interest and enthusiasm for the hybrid model, with discussions now beginning to take place across the four Schools in the Faculty. This enthusiasm was being supported by the institutional approach of conferences, which allowed for demonstration of good practice at UP and for increased discussions among colleagues. The sense conveyed during the interviews was that the institutional environment was now beginning to support these inter-departmental and inter-faculty conversations and to enable colleagues to start thinking differently about their approaches to teaching and learning. Specifically, it was mentioned as adding considerable value when international visitors also interacted directly with faculties and engaged at faculty level on faculty agendas.

The Faculty of Education, too, is embracing a hybrid model in the development of their BEd (Hons) programme, which includes a greater online presence. Interview participants stressed the continuing value of face-to-face teaching, as being able to create safe spaces for students to discuss controversial issues, whereby received knowledge can be “disrupted”. This attitude explains their perception of the value of a hybrid model above fully online learning.

A further innovation has been the introduction of a programme for newly appointed academic Heads of Department. The curriculum involves much networking and discussion, Faculty-specific information and information about support departments, and structured mentoring. It was reported that the first group of newly appointed HoDs who completed the programme in 2015 felt that it provided much just-in-time information required to lead an academic department, and would allow them to enhance the teaching undertaken in the department. In 2016 this approach will be enhanced by means of a coach for each new HOD.

While funding allocations are being made to Scholarship of Teaching and Learning research, it was indicated that this research is not always acknowledged in Faculties, which suggests that, in some environments, it may be seen as less important than disciplinary research.

Institution-level conversations about curriculum transformation have begun, including conferences and symposia.

Induction of new staff

Given the importance of both teaching and research at UP, the Induction Programme for new staff has been revised to integrate teaching and research into a single Academic Induction Programme. The change, implemented in 2015, includes a substantial online component (to reduce time out of office) and flexibility to allow for tailoring of the offering to the departmental and individual needs. Given the need for just-in-time training for new lecturers, the intention is now to combine a generic workshop with specific focused workshops over the course of the year. The discussions during the interviews also showed that faculties further tailor the induction to their needs. For example, in the Health Sciences Faculty a formal Academic Induction Programme is in place and includes mentoring of staff.

It was unclear to what extent other faculties offer mentoring of new staff, though this was mentioned as being in place in some faculties. (The baseline report signals an interest in mentoring of staff.)

This induction programme is meant to be completed while staff are on probation; however, compliance has, to date, not been monitored.

While there was overall positivity towards these developments, there was a perception that, currently, full participation is hindered by concern around factors such as:

- Work load – with dual medium instruction, the teaching load is generally regarded as heavy, with much time required for preparation and delivery; and research output

is closely monitored. It was mentioned that many staff are reluctant to embark on the PGCHE, which they felt would impact negatively on their research output.

- In the interviews it was mentioned that some academic environments are averse to risk, in the sense of trying out new approaches to teaching. When a teaching innovation is made, it is generally not clear at the outset whether this will actually enhance students' performance (learning may improve, but marks may go down); and if student performance drops, the HOD will require an explanation. If students do not perform well, then the academic is more likely to revert to the old style of teaching, and this may discourage other staff from similarly implementing innovations.

The lack of professional development for part-time staff was mentioned as a concern, but not further discussed.

Reward and recognition

The University has moved strongly towards professionalization of teaching, which is currently rewarded through annual Faculty and institutional Teaching Awards (previously offered every two years), and Teaching Excellence Awards. There has been further development in seeking to refine the criteria for the teaching awards, at both Faculty and institutional level, and also in aligning them with the criteria for performance appraisal; this remains work in progress.

There has been some progress in including teaching in the criteria for promotion, in terms of the policy approved in 2010; but the consensus in the interviews was that an institutional approach to this had not emerged, and implementation of the policy at faculty level is uneven. Although mention was made of the need for academics to have teaching portfolios, it was not clear whether actual teaching portfolios were required, or whether other approaches to evaluating teaching were used separately, e.g. student evaluations and peer evaluation of learning guides. A representative from the Faculty of Education indicated that, in their faculty, the criteria for teaching evaluation were being taken almost as seriously as those for research. The Faculty of Health Sciences intends piloting the use of actual teaching portfolios.

Teaching portfolios are not required for the confirmation of permanent appointment following the probation period.

A challenge which became strongly apparent in the interviews is the perception that dedication to teaching does not bring much reward or recognition, and that considerably more weight is still placed on research. An example was mentioned where a rated researcher was promoted without evidence of teaching strength. The tension between research and teaching is experienced across the sector; as a research institution, UP might wish to give further thought to how policy can best be implemented to achieve the University's aim of also valuing and rewarding academics in their role as university teachers.

Workload and performance appraisal

During the past two years a comprehensive, mathematically driven workload model has been developed by the DVC: Institutional Planning. This allows consideration of workloads, not only from the perspective of FTE inputs, but also of outputs, in terms of departmental effectiveness, including increased throughput rates. In this way, inconsistencies and imbalances in workload and staffing across departments can be highlighted and addressed. The model (as originally developed in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences) also allows for a differentiated approach to individual workloads, for instance to the workloads appropriate to the different levels of academic staff, in terms of weights allocated to teaching, research and community development. For younger staff, for instance, there can also be a focus on academic personal development, if necessary on completion of the doctorate; for senior staff there can be more of a focus on research output but also on mentoring younger staff. It was considered important that these work allocations be transparent and available to all staff, so that all staff is informed of relative workloads, to ensure full buy-in. This model is now used for staff allocation in faculties.

It appears that this model has not yet been rolled out in all faculties, though it has received buy-in; ongoing refinement around implementation will be needed for the next few years. Interviewees from several faculties noted that considerable attention was being paid to workload, but that this was an extremely complex process and would doubtless take some time to implement effectively. For instance, the introduction of blended learning would introduce additional workload demands and complexities. The panel wishes to commend UP on the considerable progress made in this regard, and note that the model will doubtless be of value across the sector.

Performance appraisal was regularly mentioned in the interviews, again as an area in which progress is being made. An electronic system is in place (though there was no mention of a Policy), with staff contracting with their HOD at the start of the year as to deliverables, and being subsequently assessed.

An interviewee mentioned that since performance appraisal had been introduced the appraisal criteria had been further refined to accommodate personal development plans, which was experienced as motivating. It was unclear to what extent mentoring in terms of individual performance plans is in place; one participant stressed the need for this to be extended, while acknowledging developments in the rollout of performance appraisal. Here, too, it appears that performance appraisal is being managed somewhat differently in the various faculties: one interviewee stated that it was simply a matter of research outputs that have to be delivered, regardless of teaching load or seniority; another interviewee spoke of support for staff to complete a doctorate, and of the availability of sabbatical leave for staff who wished to develop a module in blended mode, but felt that this was not widely known, and that this would depend on the availability of colleagues to 'take up the teaching slack'. It appears that, in some environments, the performance appraisal system is indeed being used to support teaching innovation and excellence; in other environments less so.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

The consensus of the panel was that, while undoubted progress is being made, both institutionally and in faculties, in certain key instances UP would benefit from a stronger institutional approach, and particularly in areas such as probation and promotion, workload and performance appraisal. It is acknowledged that there is need for contextualisation in very different faculty environments; at the same time key principles could be mapped out, in terms of UP values and strategic goals, which could then be taken into faculties and departments, with the explicit goal of ensuring greater coherence and fairness.

UP has done extremely valuable work around workload; the panel urges the institution to ensure that this approach filters down and becomes embedded in all Faculties and departments, and to finalise a model which could be shared with other institutions.

As regards probation and promotion, the panel urges the institution to continue its work on implementing the use of teaching portfolios as a valuable developmental tool, in terms of specified criteria. While there may be differences in the details of implementation from one faculty to another, it may be useful for the issue to be discussed at a Deans' forum to ensure implementation across the institution.

The panel urges UP to consider ways of introducing the mentoring of all new staff, as is apparently already happening in a few faculties.

The panel suggest that UP consider further ways of incentivising teaching excellence, specifically in view of the incentives available to excellent researchers. This would be likely to require consideration of the appropriate weighting of teaching and research in a research intensive university, and perhaps allowing greater flexibility among individuals within a department and faculty, rather than expecting the same level of research output and teaching excellence (beyond an acceptable level of competence) of everyone. Ways to raise the status and acceptability of teaching-related research should also be explored.

3. FOCUS AREA 2: ENHANCING STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

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

THE INSTITUTION'S STRENGTHS

Activities in this focus area, too, are guided by the strategic plan UP 2025 and specifically by Goal Five: 'to increase access, throughput and diversity'. Over the past five years a strongly developmental approach to student support has emerged, and has been taken forward by effective structures with considerable success. The University has identified that student support needs to be centrally coordinated with the focus on the student life cycle, the process from registration to graduation. Key aspects at institutional level include:

- The Task Team on Student Access and Success;

- Student Academic Development and Excellence Model (SADEM);
- UP CARES (Continuous Alert, Referral and Engagement System);
- Student Academic Readiness Survey (STARS).

Other initiatives mentioned in the first report include the Faculty Student Advisors (FSAs), tutors, mentors, academic literacy initiatives, orientation, and a focus on psycho-social integration and extracurricular support and development.

It is clear that UP has already invested considerable resources and energy in this focus area, as is evidenced by the well above-average retention and throughput rates.

THE APPROACH TAKEN TO IMPROVEMENT

Under the leadership of the DVC: Academic and the Department for Education Innovation, the institution has continued to work through the existing structures, as these clearly serve their purposes well. Given the considerable institutional strength in this focus area, there have been relatively few completely new initiatives. Much work has been a continuation and refinement of what was already in place, with refinements generally based on an on-going process of research into the impact of initiatives, so that decision-making can be based on actual data. Two trends are discernible: on the one hand, some initiatives are gradually becoming more deeply embedded in faculties; on the other, a few interesting new pilots are emerging from faculties, which have yet to be institutionally embedded.

The institution is undoubtedly challenged in terms of resources to provide support for the close to 35 000 undergraduates on all campuses, but has made optimal use of Teaching Development Grant funding, and also seeks to assess impact before allocating further funding.

IMPROVEMENTS UNDERTAKEN AND PROGRESS MADE

General comments

Given the enthusiasm of the interviewees, the panel often found it difficult to differentiate between existing initiatives, and initiatives that were introduced during the two years since the beginning of the QEP.

The institutional teaching and learning model guides the coherent application of underlying principles by all faculties. In the interviews the sense was expressed that there was now an institutional commitment to supporting students: 'we're all in this together'. It was no longer simply being left to the faculties. While there were some clear commonalities among faculties (e.g. the Faculty Student Advisors), in other aspects faculties appeared to be 'going their own way', which might result in some gaps in student support. At the same time, the growing collaboration between academic environments and the support services, including academic administration, which was mentioned during the interviews, is clearly significant. A student comment confirmed that communication between the various structures involved

in student support (the ‘eco-system’: centralised and Faculty-based components) had improved.

Some mention was made of the shift in the composition of the student body, with fewer students asking for tuition in Afrikaans, and greater numbers of students for whom English is a second or third language entering the institution, including substantial numbers of international students. This growing diversity in the student body is impacting both on teaching approaches and on the support being offered to students, specifically in terms of language support.

The established system of Faculty Student Advisors (FSAs) (one per Faculty) continues to play a key role as an interface between academic staff and students who need additional support, or who simply have queries. The FSAs are now succeeding in ‘getting their name’ out into the faculty and partnering with academic staff. This is a role that will undoubtedly be of interest to other institutions. In this regard, the Deputy Director: Department for Education Innovation has instituted monthly meetings of all FSAs at which challenges that arise are discussed. The community of practice developed additional expertise. However, the FSAs are still appointed on contract against the institution’s Teaching Development Grant.

UP’s longstanding interest in evidence-driven interventions is expanding into a focus on data and learning analytics, which is being further supported by its participation in the Siyaphumulela project. This project has allowed the institution to build capacity and expertise in the field of using data to promote student success. This approach, too, should be of value to other institutions.

Of considerable interest is the innovative FLY@UP (the Finish Line is Yours) initiative, which was recently launched. FLY@UP seeks to motivate students to complete their studies in the minimum time. Students registering in 2016 for three-year degrees were issued with badges saying ‘class of 2018’, as a constant motivation for them to assess their progress in terms of this goal and seek guidance and assistance when needed. The year on the badge depends on the length of the degree. It is assumed that this is a longer-term project, but students have already begun asking for their badge, so there appears to be buy-in.

Career and curriculum advising

The University has a long history of building relationships with students at high school, which includes career and curriculum advising, and which have recently been extended by means of a software application.

- Grade 10 and 11 students join the university for winter and summer schools covering mathematics and science. This appears to be in the context of Junior Tukkies, a school outreach programme established in 2004 in which students from feeder schools who show the potential to study at university are identified and invited to participate over three years. Increasingly this programme is seeking to support the development of learners’ reading abilities, in preparation for tertiary education study.

- Career advice targeting grade 9 students using a software application developed in-house, Career App.Tizer, was launched in November 2015.

The University is well aware (from institutional research) that students are more prone to drop out if they register for an inappropriate qualification, which may be due to lack of career guidance, but also to other factors such as parental pressure.

Curriculum advising is available for current students, for both incoming students and for senior students who may need to repeat modules. However, there are currently problems in aligning this with the new on-line registration. This will be considered further under Focus area 4 below.

There was no mention of career advising in the documentation, but in the interviews an institutional focus on entrepreneurship and internship programmes was mentioned several times. These programmes have been found to awaken the interest and motivation of students. (An Executive member mentioned the need for career counselling, with its impact on student performance, as an area of 'great concern'.)

Life and academic skills development

New developments have built on UP's long-standing experience and expertise in this field.

The use of the Student Academic Readiness Survey (STARS), an internally-developed test of students' self-perceptions of non-cognitive factors that may impact on academic achievement, has continued. First year students are tested for academic readiness during orientation. The test covers broad areas such as academic attitude and needs, motivational factors, background factors, test and examination skills and general well-being. The results are made available to students on the UP portal, and those who give consent have their results passed on to the Faculty Student Advisors (FSA), who follow-up with them where necessary, directing them to appropriate support.

After attempts in the past to lengthen Orientation for first year students to two weeks, Orientation has once again been reduced to one week, but is now supplemented by an on-line academic orientation programme (UPO), which was modified during the last two years to develop Faculty-specific versions. In the past students were overloaded with information during orientation; now they have access to information online during the whole of their first year. Given the importance of reading for academic success, a reading programme has been embedded into UPO. Resources include study skills, time management skills, test-taking skills, contact details for assistance within the university, messages from the Faculty and so on. Most recently, UPO has included a unit entitled *Doing Diversity Differently*. The performance of students in UPO is monitored by the FSAs, who also provide faculty-specific support.

Academic literacy has been a focus of continued development, with the final report mentioning an overall shift away from generic support towards more discipline-focused support. The institution is clearly aware of the importance of reading skills for success in

higher education. One interviewee spoke of research that had confirmed that these skills were important not only in text-intensive disciplines, but also in fields such as accounting and the natural sciences. The development of reading expertise appears to be being addressed primarily through the reading unit in UPO, although there was some mention of reading development in specific faculties, such as a LektorSA reading programme that has been introduced for the Nursing students and ReadOn in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

As regards writing support, the Humanities Writing Centre in the Unit for Academic Literacy has existed for two years and in this time has established itself as a source of support to students in the Faculty and to other faculties. Support has been extended beyond one-on-one consultations; the Centre also works with the FSA, offers workshops (a series of writing skills workshops, available on a voluntary basis), and is increasingly being invited into classes. Students have become aware of the facility and are now coming of their own accord. The Unit deals not only with first year students. In one discipline, for instance, owing to pressure of numbers, little writing is done in the first two years, and students are seriously challenged by the critical essay required in third year. By integrating the work of the Writing Centre into this module, this challenge has been successfully addressed. It was noted that lecturers are now becoming aware of the Writing Centre, and are beginning to draw on its expertise for specific courses.

A different approach is offered by the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences. All first year BSc students are required to do the NST module, in which they are prepared to read scientific articles in their discipline; a section of this module teaches reading skills and academic literacy.

There was little discussion on academic literacy development in other faculties, although apparently every faculty does have an academic literacy module, at least for students who have not demonstrated academic proficiency in English or Afrikaans.

Counselling and mentoring

The mentorship programme for first year and some second year students appears to be well developed. Mentoring is undertaken by senior students who are given training but are not paid. The mentorship programme operates across faculties and residences to provide social and emotional support, though approaches quite possibly differ from faculty to faculty. The interviews indicated that communication between mentor and mentee may be through face to face meetings or social media. The panel heard that there are layers of structures and that Faculties ensure that students who do not live in University accommodation also receive mentoring.

Considerable support is provided in residences. UP has 9600 beds available in residences, and places in residence are prioritised for applicants with good school performance. (There are a few Faculty-based residences, e.g. for Veterinary students, for Health Sciences students and for the Thuthuka Accounting programme students. But most residences have students from across disciplines.) Residences have adopted the concept of a listening, learning and

living environment, i.e. are considered places where students will extend their learning in various ways. First years are expected to attend a compulsory study time daily. This ensures that students in the residences keep up with their academic work. Managers have been appointed for residence management and student life, and for student support and leadership development. They have access to marks and other student data and check student performance at the end of the semester; if necessary, appropriate interventions are put in place. An interviewee spoke with pride about outstanding performance by many residence students.

Of interest, too, was a further initiative emerging from the Siyaphumelela project: the piloting of learning communities. The Department of Student Affairs has launched this project among the extended programme students on the Mamelodi campus. Students who take two or more subjects in common are placed in a learning community, where they offer each other mutual study support.

Student counselling in the traditional sense of psychological counselling is available to students by appointment (also through referral by the FSAs). A student comment suggested that provision of psychologists was inadequate but this is a challenge experienced across the sector.

Student performance monitoring and referral

UP has a long history of monitoring student performance. As mentioned earlier, this begins each year during Orientation, when students are requested to complete the STARS survey, which allows potential non-cognitive risk areas to be identified. (STARS has a long history of use and is well-respected.)

The UP CARES tracking system was proposed in 2009 with the goal of monitoring student performance during the semester and referring students appropriately. The eventual solution was Blackboard Analytics for Learn. However, this system has had its limitations, in that the University has struggled to integrate the Blackboard Learn (*clickUP*) and PeopleSoft grade centres. As a result, the monitoring of student performance has generally only been possible at the end of the semester. Progress in resolving these issues was reported as being slow, with academic staff reluctant to enter their marks on the LMS if the grade centres are not integrated as it doubles the workload.

During the past two years the Faculty of Economic and Management Science (EMS) has been collaborating with DEI around the Faculty's Six Weeks project, utilising the Analytics for Learn module within Blackboard, and has succeeded in establishing a fairly robust system that allows for monitoring of student progress within the first two weeks and then at six-weekly intervals. Interviewees from the Faculty spoke with enthusiasm about this project, which has made a real difference to student performance. This approach involves all lecturers teaching the first year high impact modules in the Faculty entering regular assessment marks on their grade centre in Blackboard and sending through these marks (coloured green, orange and red by the system) to the Faculty Retention Centre. Students

identified as 'not performing' are then requested to complete an on-line questionnaire that allows specific risk areas to be identified (including academic, environmental and psychological risk factors), and that can then be addressed via referrals or academic interventions well before the final examinations. The Faculty Student Advisor is involved in this process. Interviewees indicated that this initiative has been welcomed by students, as confirming that the university cares for their wellbeing. It was indicated that the institution is now in a position to scale this initiative to all Faculties.

Given the challenges experienced nationally in using on-going monitoring of student performance to allow for timely interventions, this is a project which will undoubtedly be of interest to other institutions using Blackboard products.

A further interesting initiative was reported by the Faculty of Health Sciences. The Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning has introduced a Student Support Forum to promote the sharing of somewhat divergent approaches to student support and mentoring among the Schools in the Faculty. In addition, the Faculty has established an Impaired Students Committee, on which the Faculty Student Advisor sits, and which allows issues requiring medical and physical support to be addressed.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

The role that FSAs and mentors play in supporting students is crucial and well-conceived and is clearly having an impact on student success. While there is enormous pressure on staffing resources, the University is urged to consider ways of making FSAs longer-term, preferably permanent, appointments, with the goal of retaining and growing the developed expertise.

The University is urged to consider roll-out to other faculties of the 'Six Weeks project' currently operating successfully in EMS, in ways that are appropriate for their specific environments, and, at the same time, to continue with the integration of the PeopleSoft and Blackboard grade centres, with the goal of achieving time-saving, real-time monitoring of student performance.

Processes for monitoring and referral appear at present to focus predominantly on first-year students. Perhaps the University could consider ways of extending these processes to second and senior level students.

Given that it is crucial to provide career guidance/advice at a very early stage, the University could consider using the information obtained from UPO (or introduce a component related to personal career development, if it is not there) to assist with re-directing students who appear to be at risk owing to wrong subject choices.

The university is well aware of the importance of reading skills for student success, and of academic literacy in the broader sense, and is to be congratulated on integrating a reading skills unit into UPO, and on the establishment of a Writing Centre in the Faculty of Humanities. Given that development in academic literacy is incremental, and best addressed

within the context of disciplines, it is recommended that the university consider ways of expanding these existing initiatives still further, to ensure that on-going development, as appropriate, and possibly 'just-in-time' opportunities, reaches students in all Faculties.

4. FOCUS AREA 3: ENHANCING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTs

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

THE INSTITUTION'S STRENGTHS

In line with the strategic plan UP 2025, a Master Plan for facilities management was revised and approved in 2012, accompanied by an IT Master Plan, which is revised annually. A large part of this focus area falls under the portfolio of the Vice Principal: Institutional Planning. During the interviews the panel was informed that this positioning was a strategic move to ensure that resource allocation and planning are coherently aligned and addressed.

UP has excellent academic libraries on all campuses, with print and online books and journals; mobile access is possible through the UP app. Undergraduate students are assisted by means of a reserve room with textbooks, and online assignment support.

The University has identified the learning environment to include both physical and virtual spaces, in line with the hybrid/ blended learning approach to teaching. Physical teaching venues, especially for large classes and tutorials, are increasingly coming under pressure, in spite of on-going building and structured upgrades. Computer laboratories make around 6000 seats available, which are also utilised for wide-spread computer-based testing, by means of *QuestUP* and *clickUP* (UP's version of the Blackboard learning management system). The first report indicated only a limited number of dedicated learning spaces outside of classrooms. Of significance is the Mining Engineering Study Centre, completed in 2013, for Engineering students, which is well used. To increase the availability of informal learning spaces, Wi-Fi has been implemented in open areas across all campuses. Students are able to purchase a laptop at a discounted price through the national Student Laptop Initiative.

ClickUP is widely used by both staff and students. A student survey of *clickUP* usage has confirmed student commitment to online learning.

THE APPROACH TAKEN TO IMPROVEMENT

In line with its evidence-based approach, the University has researched and benchmarked the planned provision of IT services and facilities and Wi-Fi roll-out. Facilities Management, Information Technology Services (ITS) and Education Innovation have developed strategies and plans, guided by UP 2025. An important initiative has been the establishment of the Unit for Academic IT, which was formed to focus specifically on academic IT needs. All faculties are represented on its steering committee by Deans or Deputy Deans.

IMPROVEMENTS UNDERTAKEN AND PROGRESS MADE

Teaching and learning spaces

UP has a strong awareness of the need for social learning spaces (based on the success of such spaces in the Mining Engineering Study Centre), and it has included these in new building projects. Mention was made during the interviews of the new lecturing venue complex at the Health Sciences campus, and of the developments at the Onderstepoort campus (laboratory space, a student centre with social learning space and a student IT lab.) The University is now working to create more such spaces. A scan by the Department of Facilities Management is seeking to identify flat spaces that can be used for learning, including lobbies and wide corridors.

Existing computer laboratories have been refurbished and expanded.

The University has nine dining halls which are regarded as multi-purpose centres as they easily become study and discussion areas. This is over and above the residences' own study rooms. Wi-Fi coverage has also been extended to these spaces.

ICT infrastructure and access

The University has recently restructured its IT Division to include a new Unit for Academic IT, grouping together the 'customer facing' aspects of IT, so as to ensure that all IT provision is informed by academic needs. The Unit provides support, on the one hand, for researchers, and on the other hand for what has been termed 'classroom technologies', including video technologies in classrooms, as well as for the student computing laboratories.

From the documents and interviews, it is apparent that much effort is going into providing lecturing space with enhanced Wi-Fi. The roll-out of Wi-Fi is policy driven. With Wi-Fi already rolled out in the open spaces on the campuses, the focus is now on lecture venues (and associated building spaces, e.g. passages), with the process managed by the Steering Committee of the Unit for Academic IT. As a pilot, the Faculty of Education identified some priority lecture halls for installation of Wi-Fi. The panel was informed that UP is seeking to ensure sufficient density of Wi-Fi in each venue to allow many students to log on simultaneously. Following the pilot, funding has now been allocated for the broad rollout of Wi-Fi, and it is estimated that all lecture halls will be equipped by the end of 2016, initially some with higher density than others. However, progress with installation is somewhat unpredictable, in that the lecture venues are constantly in use, which can prevent their being available for installation of Wi-Fi. Once Wi-Fi is in place, usage will be monitored and necessary adjustments to densification made.

Student residences also have comprehensive Wi-Fi coverage and small IT laboratories. (This is a separate project and is funded by the residences.) The institutional IT laboratories appear to be well-equipped and available for students. In Health Sciences, for example, computer laboratories are available 24 hours a day, but in some other environments cuts in funding

may preclude the appointment of the necessary student assistants and result in shorter opening hours.

The University is conscious of the fact that students residing off campus may not have access to Wi-Fi. To this end, the panel heard that negotiations are taking place with service providers to provide data at an agreed price to students. The proposal is that students should receive data every month and would be able to submit assignments on-line.

UP does not at present have a policy or strategy on equipping all first-year students with electronic devices, but the national Students' Technology Programme continues, and enables students to purchase a computer at a lower cost than through normal shops.

Attention is also being paid to the audio-visual facilities in lecturing venues. Following a survey of challenges, a phased improvement plan was drawn up and resourced. For instance, all microphones were updated to international standards, first on the Hatfield campus and subsequently on the other campuses. All data projectors are to be replaced and connected to the IT network for proactive management, e.g. anticipation of replacements. Sound equipment, too, is being replaced as necessary.

Technology-enabled tools and resources

The move to the hybrid mode of offering is driven by factors such as ease of access to information for students, reducing congestion in the lecturing venues and flexibility to be able to continue the academic endeavour in case of interruptions (such as protests). Discussions during the interviews revealed that experiments with this mode of offering have commenced. For example in the Faculty of Law, material is being placed on-line and lecture time is rather being used for rich conversations and debate; there is also extensive use made of 'clickers' (personal response devices). Another example is the School of Medicine which has set up an experimental training management system online to avoid overcrowding in hospitals. Students have access to this at their convenience for self-training. The panel also heard that the Bachelor of Education Honours programme was being offered in a hybrid mode from 2016.

As the considerable majority of UP modules have an online presence, the focus has now turned to ensuring that pedagogically sound use is made of the possibilities for online learning. DHET funding has been used to offer workshops for staff, e.g. on the flipped classroom approach, use of YouTube videos and preparation of web-based courses. The initial workshops were attended by around 30 staff members, and the coming year will indicate what uptake there is of these affordances in actual classes. The Department for Education Innovation is guiding the development of primarily online modules, which are currently mostly at Master's level. The general sense that was presented in the interviews is that there has been a rapid increase in interest in e-learning and the hybrid model, which increased markedly during the student protests in late 2015 and early 2016.

A UP mobile app based on Blackboard was rolled out in 2014 and it is clear that student use is high. The panel welcomed UP's ongoing research into the usefulness of *clickUP* in the enhancement of teaching and learning.

Library facilities

The Library has made positive moves to create spaces for creativity, including a Makerspace with 3D printers and scanners, to allow for interaction and collaboration between students.

The 24-hour study centres available in the Library were praised by a student interviewee, as was the 24-hour computer lab in the Health Sciences Library.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

In terms of the institution's hybrid learning model, it is suggested that the University considers more closely the ways in which all Divisions, including the Library, can contribute to it. The University might want to reconsider this interface in terms of provision of e-resources, training of students to use these, and enhancing of training of academic staff to use and produce e-resources for teaching, in terms of pedagogically sound models.

The provision of devices for indigent students is an area that could be considered further, possibly most productively in a national conversation of HEIs.

The panel supports the need for continued discussions at UP around the potential impact of ubiquitous Wi-Fi across the campuses on the role of, and need for, student computer laboratories, before there is any further investment in the building of additional computer laboratories.

It is suggested that UP consider the introduction of a committee or working group to ensure alignment between the institution's educational philosophy and the design of teaching and learning spaces, including considering a focus on the introduction of multipurpose spaces. Such a committee, including facilities staff, excellent university teachers and teaching and learning specialists, would help ensure that physical spaces are designed around supporting sound pedagogy.

5. FOCUS AREA 4: ENHANCING COURSE AND PROGRAMME ENROLMENT

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

THE INSTITUTION'S STRENGTHS

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

As in other areas of the University activities, this focus area is guided by UP 2025, and the specific goal ‘To increase access, throughput and diversity’. The University has identified focus and strategic areas to address this goal. These include:

- Provision of an integrated and streamlined process for student administration.
- Commitment to enrolment planning and growth.
- Commitment to strengthening and expanding extended programmes.
- Use of the Siyaphumelela initiative to focus on High Impact Modules (HIMs) (Gateway modules) and to coach staff in data analytics, so as to aid better understanding and use of data.

Recruitment is primarily undertaken through the Student Recruitment and Junior Tukkies Office, located in the Client Service Centre (before the restructuring discussed later), which involves the Faculties in initiatives such as Open Days and Expos. Attempts are made to build relationships with learners from Grade 9 onwards, to ensure learners make appropriate subject choices, in particular through the Junior Tukkies initiative, which also includes a Grade 11 Empowerment Week and a Grade 12 Preparation Conference. A four-year strategy has sought to increase the number of Black undergraduate students, and gradual progress is being made, although there is still a lower realisation rate for black applicants. Ongoing research into the outcomes of the various initiatives informs strategies and policies around recruitment.

Faculty admission requirements are re-considered annually. In some Faculties, NBT results are required in addition to the NSC results. Selection programmes can require a range of additional information and activities. The institution also runs a number of DHET-funded extended and augmented curriculum programmes, where substantial numbers of black African students are registered, and where performance is closely monitored. The admission requirements for these programmes usually require NBT results that show that students have the potential to succeed with additional help even though their NSC results alone do not allow them admission into the mainstream programme.

An academic exclusions/ readmissions process is in place, but has raised a number of concerns, such as, is readmission indeed in the best longer-term interest of many under-performing students? Performance in gateway modules is regularly monitored and interventions undertaken.

THE APPROACH TAKEN TO IMPROVEMENT

The University has approached this focus area by taking a critical look at the existing structures relating to student academic administration and, as a result, designing and implementing a major restructuring project, the ‘Optimizing Student Services’ project.

In addition, there has been a further shift towards the use of online applications and registrations.

IMPROVEMENTS UNDERTAKEN AND PROGRESS MADE

Admissions, selection and placement

A key change has been the complete restructuring of the Client Services Centre (including Student Finance) and Academic Administration, with the several departments involved being merged into the new Department of Enrolment and Student Administration (DESA). The purpose was to ensure optimal integration of student administrative services, from registration through to graduation. The new structure was expected to be fully implemented by March 2016; the remaining challenge will then be to align systems with the new structure. This substantial restructuring was felt to be necessitated as additional modules of PeopleSoft software were implemented, and in anticipation of changes in the management of NSFAS (when financial aid money will go directly to students rather than being allocated and managed by universities) and the introduction of DHET's Central Applications System.

The University encourages on-line applications, which have increased from 30% to 70% over the past few years, and seeks to ensure that administration systems can be accessed on mobile devices. In 2015 the university moved to online registration *only*, with dedicated venues on campus to help students who needed assistance. However, the vast majority of entrants (about 80%) registered off-campus, frequently late at night.

With the shift to on-line registration, challenges are now being experienced as regards the implementation of curriculum advising, both for entrants and for senior students who may have failed some modules. First year students are asked to register only after Orientation, when curriculum advising takes place, but some do not wait for this; last year information cards were included in the wallets handed out to students, and there was an increased uptake for the advisory service.

As regards senior students, previously poorly performing students were required to consult with academic staff prior to registration but, once the online system is open, there are currently no blocks to their registering for as many courses as they wish. Although curriculum consultation is available, attendance is low, with the result that much time is subsequently spent in correcting problem registrations.

Interviewees indicated that the system is under constant modification, year by year, and that the challenges experienced as regards curriculum advising will be addressed. The goal is a system that can manage registrations, credits achieved, any required prerequisites and the total number of permissible credit registrations on a continuous basis. In other words, online registration must be rule based.

The SRC has assisted in making information readily available to incoming students during Registration by means of a Help Desk staffed by SRC members.

Readmission refusal

The panel was informed during the interviews that there is a committee in each faculty that considers all exclusions, with student representation. In first year, students are not excluded during the first semester – rather mid-year ‘exclusion’ serves as warning that performance must improve, and these students are generally re-admitted once they have written a letter detailing what strategies for improvement they have put in place. Any student excluded may appeal their exclusion through a formal appeal process. A cluster analysis has also been performed on the mid-year results for many years and students are proactively contacted by FSAs if they are at risk.

Pass rates in gateway courses

Pass rates are regularly interrogated, and data analytics are utilised to indicate and flag students at risk, especially in the High Impact Modules (gateway courses). The Vice-Principal: Academic has set challenging targets to improve pass rates in high impact modules. There are numerous interventions in place, as detailed elsewhere in this report.

Throughput rates

From the data provided, the University’s throughput rates are above the national norm, but the University has an interest in improving them. The intention is to move completions in minimum time from 39% to 45% over the next three years, for three-year degrees. A task team has been set up to consider factors affecting pass rates, such as socioeconomic factors. Monitoring of performance in modules also takes place on a regular basis. Pass rates are linked to performance management and Deans and Departmental Heads are responsible for monitoring pass rates in modules. Modules that have pass rates below 70% receive specific attention and may be reviewed to effect improvement.

Management Information System (MIS)

PeopleSoft/ Oracle is the underlying software platform for all systems at the University. Some work was done on the Oracle BI tools to build a warehouse that would be populated from the PS system to accommodate the MIS of the University but it proved unsatisfactory for reporting. The University therefore aims to install HEDA (Higher Education Data Analytics), a reporting system that will draw data from the warehouse and be more user friendly in terms of people being able to draw more data for themselves. At present, statistics are available and provide a global picture on enrolment and progression; interactive information can easily be downloaded to assist faculties in monitoring students.

The implementation of HEDA for HEMIS data will enable cohort analyses to be conducted. Dashboards will be available so that academic staff can readily access information.

The Learning Management System, *clickUP*, is also used to gather information used for student support. Data from PeopleSoft are included and student performance is monitored

using click stream data only at present and not marks. Integration is still needed between the *clickUp* and PeopleSoft gradebooks, a project that has been ongoing since 2009.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

In this focus area major work is underway, both as regards the restructuring process within Client Services and Academic Administration, and as regards the reconfiguring of the MIS through the integration of HEDA and PeopleSoft/ Oracle.

The University's intention to shift throughput rates in minimum time from the higher-than-norm 39% to 45% is commendable, and the panel wishes the institution every success in this regard. This will undoubtedly involve a concerted and integrated approach by all sectors of the UP community, based on the considerable developmental work already in place, and success in this endeavour will be of substantial interest to the rest of the sector.

The panel urges the institution to address the challenges raised by the introduction of on-line registration to providing the essential curriculum advising timeously to students, both to first years and to senior students, and ensuring that all rules are implemented in the system, including allowed credit loads.

6. SUMMARY

From the discussions during the visit it was apparent that the University executive is fully committed to the QEP process and to its core principles, including sharing of practices between universities, focusing on enhancement rather than shortcomings, and using the insights gained from such a reflexive exercise. The executive indicated that the process had resonated with the approach that the University has adopted, through its strategic plan, UP 2025. The executive furthermore confirmed that the QEP process had encouraged the institution to reflect, once again, on each of the focus areas as imperatives towards enhancing the success of students.

At the same time, as noted in the introduction to this report, the panel found a discrepancy between the extensive baseline report, the rather limited final report, and the interviews. Given the staff commitment and enthusiasm evident in the interviews, the peer evaluators concluded that the final report had seriously undersold the University and its many initiatives – owing, it became clear, to a misunderstanding as to the expected nature of the final report. On the other hand, the interviews enabled the panel to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the considerable work being undertaken at the UP in the four focus areas.

The panel therefore wishes to suggest that UP might re-consider what appears to be a tradition of rather underselling itself (in terms of its self-reflective and critical approach), and whether it might not also on occasion be appropriate to move to celebrating its positive achievements.

On the basis of the written reports and the interviews, what became apparent to the panel was an overall trend towards greater institutional integration, with two key examples:

- Firstly, the huge investment in PeopleSoft software as a single institutional operating system, which is allowing for institutional integration at a very high level. Inter alia this has included the integration of all areas of student services, including postgraduate students. The inclusion of postgraduate students is commendable as student-focused services often target undergraduate students only.
- Secondly, in constituting the task teams associated with the QEP, the deliberate effort to cut across silos and include staff across the University connected to each focus area. For example, the team dealing with student enrolment included both academic staff and support staff dealing, for instance, with academic administration and with data. This trend of moving away from academic silos appears also to extend to other institutional committees.

Participants noted that it would be valuable to extend this type of coherent integration still further, e.g. as regards facilities management and the academic project.

The panel wishes to commend the institution on its dynamism and responsiveness with regard to the numerous important initiatives relating to student success. Noteworthy was the integrated approach to planning, the structures put in place to support teaching and learning and student success, and the institution's interest and leadership in sector-wide collaboration. The students interviewed showed strong commitment to the institution, while at the same time being able to express somewhat divergent opinions. The panel also noted with appreciation the institution's evidence-led approach to innovation and interventions. Levels of innovation are clearly high at UP.

At the same time, innovation needs to be embedded, to ensure that it becomes institutional practice; and in this regard the panel found that the level of coherence differed across the four focus areas, although in each focus area excellent work was being done.

In Focus Area Two, the wide and valuable range of initiatives generally reflected a coordinated and coherent institutional approach to student support and development, with initiatives well-embedded in faculties. Particularly significant was the interface between STARS and the Faculty Student Advisors, who were positioned to intervene rapidly and effectively on the basis of student data. Their continued development by means of a community of practice was also noteworthy. These various activities were reflected in the high-than-norm retention rate. The panel noted with particular interest the institution's determination to improve the success rate from the current 39% to 45% over three years, which will require a concerted effort across all Faculties and programmes, and wishes the institution every success with this initiative. Success in this regard will be of considerable interest to the sector.

In Focus Area Three, the panel found the institution's awareness of the need for social learning spaces particularly noteworthy. Also of interest is the formation of the Unit for Academic IT, and the committee-based approach that was adopted, with a high level of representation by Faculties, to ensure a strong interface between ICTs and academic needs. One area to which the institution might wish to pay attention would be the introduction of some multipurpose teaching venues, as opposed to single-purpose large teaching venues. In addition, it is suggested that the University consider creating a multi-stakeholder committee or forum in which teaching and learning specialists, academics, facilities and planning staff can interact to ensure alignment of physical spaces and technologies with educational philosophy and sound pedagogy.

In Focus Area Four, challenges around managing the student trajectory had been identified and the institution had responded with deep-level structural changes, which anticipated sector-wide changes, and would undoubtedly improve efficiency and effectiveness, once full implementation had been achieved. Here, too, changes were being introduced at the institutional level and rolled out in all environments.

It was in Focus Area One that the panel felt there was some lack of coherence, despite the excellent work being led by DEI. While valuable initiatives had been implemented at executive-level, these had yet to filter down to faculty and departmental level for coherent implementation. The panel endorsed the requirement of a teaching portfolio for a promotion application (and possibly also for confirmation of probation), and was greatly interested in the important work being done around workload and the performance appraisal system. The institution is urged to build further on this work and to ensure that shared understandings emerge across the institution, which, while allowing for faculty contextualisation, will bring about the advisable coherence. In addition, while some mentoring of staff appears to be in place, here too there appeared to be little coherence across faculties, and the institution is urged to give further attention specifically to the mentoring of new staff.

The panel would like to make some additional suggestions for possible improvements:

UP appears to have had an ongoing focus on curriculum development, firstly in terms of introducing inquiry-based curricula, and then in terms of implementing the hybrid model of delivery (which is likely also to impact on curricula.) During the executive-level interviews, mention was made of the need for curriculum transformation, in terms of the situating of curricula in the institution's African context, and that this had been selected as theme for the year. There was, however, no mention of this during the remaining interviews, by the academic staff. The panel therefore urges UP to continue work around this important theme, and to ensure that this filters down to all academic staff for consideration with regard to disciplinary curricula.

A further area that the panel suggests UP seek to address is how best to recognise and reward teaching excellence in a research-intensive institution – a crucial topic for the sector, which should ideally be considered at a national level. In this regard, the University might consider cultivating a common understanding of what teaching excellence entails, within its

institutional context. Improving teaching delivery might also result in research productivity – as opposed to developing research in teaching for the sake of research in teaching. (The teaching portfolios mentioned above would doubtless be of value in this regard.)

An important Faculty initiative is the so-called Six Weeks' Programme in EMSC, the monitoring of overall student performance at six-weekly intervals, which allows for interventions to be put in place before the end-of-semester examinations. This is an excellent practice and addresses what appears to be a gap existing in other contexts as regards the ongoing monitoring of student performance, and the institution is urged to find ways of rolling this out to other faculties.

With respect to the system of Faculty Student Advisors (FSAs) and STARS, the panel gathered from the discussions that other universities have requested to share this system. The system is excellent, and collaboration should be encouraged and the practice shared across the sector. The FSA system is particularly noteworthy, with its positive impact on student performance. At the same time, the fact that the FSAs have hitherto been appointed on contract may limit their effectiveness as an integral part of a faculty. The University might consider integrating these positions into the faculties as part of a bigger strategic plan.

One area where the panel would strongly recommend further work is curriculum advising, as it relates to both incoming students and senior students. It is not clear whether there is at present sufficient capacity to advise first-year students prior to registration; the FSAs on their own would not appear to be adequate. In addition, with the University moving to online registration, it is essential that advising takes place before first-year students are permitted to register. With regard to senior students who have to repeat one or more modules (and who often tend to 'crowd' their curriculum), the University is urged to ensure that a system block is used to ensure that they do not register until advising has taken place.

Further initiatives could also profitably be shared across the sector, including:

- The student mentoring system (with compulsory study hours) within residences and faculties;
- The new initiative Fly@UP as a means of enhancing student motivation;
- Building links with feeder schools, and the offering of career advice to learners at an early stage (e.g. the Junior Tukkies programme).

In conclusion, the panel commends the University for the excellent work it is doing in promoting student success, and for the numerous initiatives which would be of considerable value to share with the sector. We wish you well as you continue with this work.

APPENDIX: PROGRAMME FOR QEP INSTITUTIONAL VISIT



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Council on Higher Education: Quality Enhancement Project REVIEW

18 February 2016

Reviewers:

Prof. Diane Grayson (Council on Higher Education), Prof. Usuf Chikte (Stellenbosch University), Dr Florence Southway-Ajulu (NMMU)

UP Contact

Prof. Wendy Kilfoil, Director: Department for Education Innovation wendy.kilfoil@up.ac.za; 073 574 4487

Date and Times	Activity	Venue	UP Involvement
07:45	Arrival on campus and tea	Council Chamber, Administration Building, 4 th Floor	Prof. W Kilfoil, Ms P Medupe
8:00 – 9:00	Meeting with Executive	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	Panel 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prof. Norman Duncan, Vice-Principal: Academic• Prof. A Ströh, Vice-Principal: Institutional Planning• Prof. T Mosia, Vice-Principal: Student Affairs and Residences• Prof. N Grové, Registrar• Prof. C Koornhof, Executive Director

Date and Times	Activity	Venue	UP Involvement
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms P Mushungwa, Executive Director • Prof. W Kilfoil, Director: Education Innovation
9:10 – 9:50	Theme 1 Enhancing Academics as Teachers	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	Panel 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Dianne Manning (Deputy Dean: Education, HS) • Prof. Graham Duncan (THEO) • Suzanne Bester (EDU) • Ms Sanet Haupt (EI) • Dr Louw Botha (HR) • Student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Darragh Meaker (SRC – Academic)
9:50 – 10:30	Theme 1 Enhancing Academics as Teachers	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	Panel 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Johan Oberholster (Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning, EMS) • Prof. Pieter du Toit (EDU) • Ms Ronel Swart (EDU) • Ms Detken Scheepers (EI) • Mr Rajen Moodley (HR) • Dr Matete Madiba (DSA) • Student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Merrick Steenkamp (HUM)
10:30	Tea Break	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	
10:45 – 11:25	Theme 2 Enhancing Student Support and Development	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	Panel 4: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Dirk Human (Deputy Dean, THEO) • Dr Batseba Mofolo-Mbokane (EDU) • Prof. Ana Naidoo (EI) • Ms Marie Oosthuizen (Student Finance) • Dr Willem Jorissen (DSA) • Ms Lolo Mosia (Faculty Student Advisor) • Ms Olga Molebatsi (Faculty Student Advisor) • Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr Anleo Jansen (SRC – Day Students and External Affairs) ○ Nonkululeko Mokwena (EDU)
11:25 – 12:05	Theme 2 Enhancing Student Support and Development	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	Panel 5: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Chris Boonzaaier (HUM) • Ms Corlia Joynt (EMS) • Mr Wallace Isaacs (DESA) • Prof. Vinny Naidoo (VS)

Date and Times	Activity	Venue	UP Involvement
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Kgomotso Legari (Residences) • Ms Teballo Riba (Faculty Student Advisor) • Student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alexis Schwulst (NAS)
12:15 – 12:55	Theme 3 Enhancing the Learning Environment	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	Panel 6: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Anton Kok (Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning, Law) • Dr Ananda Geyser-Fouché (THEO) • Mr André Kleynhans (ITS) • Mr Dolf Jordaan (EI) • Prof. Schalk Claasen (Facilities Management) • Student <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr Kabelo Motlhakane (SRC – Academic)
12:55 – 13:30	Lunch	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	
13:30 – 14:10	Theme 3 Enhancing the Learning Environment	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	Panel 7: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Max Braun (Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning, EDU) • Ms Celia Filmlter (HS) • Mr Kgomotso Legari (Residences) • Ms Lindiwe Soyzwapi (Library Services) • Dr Rina Wilken (DSA) • Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Justin Strydom (THEO) ○ Lettie Makone (SRC – student societies)
14:20 – 15:00	Theme 4 Enhancing Course and Programme Enrolment Management	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	Panel 8: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Marietjie Potgieter (Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning, NAS) • Dr Quenton Kritzinger (NAS FYP) • Dr Erika Muller (EBIT Augmented Programme) • Prof. Taole Mokoena (HS) • Prof. Kerstin Jordaan (NAS) • Prof. Fanus Venter (NAS) • Mr Carel Venter (BIRAP) • Ms Agreed Mkansi (Academic Planning) • Ms Cila Myburgh (DESA) • 2 students

Date and Times	Activity	Venue	UP Involvement
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nkosikhona Musa Mfuphi (EDU)
15:00 – 15:40	Theme 4 Enhancing Course and Programme Enrolment Management	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	Panel 9: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Carina de Villiers (EBIT) • Prof. Joyce Mothabeng (HS) • Ms Lucille Hermann (NAS) • Prof. Anton du Plessis (HUM) • Prof. Ken Pettey (VS) • Dr Juan-Claude Lemmens (EI) • Mr Hugo Mouton (BIRAP) • Dr Madeleine Nolte (DSA) • 2 students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ms Mizanne van Niekerk (SRC – Transformation)
15:40	Tea	Hatfield Campus, Information Technology Building, Seminar Room 2, Department for Education Innovation	
16:00 – 17:00	Reflection on the day's discussions	Council Chamber, Administration Building, 4 th Floor	Panel 10: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prof. Cheryl de la Rey, Principal and Vice Chancellor • Prof. Norman Duncan, Vice-Principal: Academic • Prof. A Ströh, Vice-Principal: Institutional Planning

Key to abbreviations: *Faculties* – HUM = Humanities, HS = Health Sciences, THEO = Theology, EMS = Economic and Management Sciences, VS = Veterinary Science, EBIT = Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology, NAS = Natural and Agricultural Sciences, EDU = Education, UAL = Unit for Academic Literacy; *Support Departments*: EI = Education Innovation, DSA = Department of Student Affairs, HR = Human Resources, DESA – Department of Enrolment and Student Administration, ITS = Information Technology Services, BIRAP = Bureau for Institutional Research and Planning.