



QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT (QEP)
INSTITUTIONAL REPORT: Phase 2

Name of Institution:

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Date of submission:

22 December 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents a self-assessment of the progress that Sol Plaatje University (SPU) has made in developing the quality of our teaching and learning activities in relation to the four focus areas identified by Council on Higher Education's Quality Enhancement Project (QEP). While this report represents SPU's contribution to the second phase of the QEP initiative, it is prepared without reference to a first-phase submission, for the simple reason that SPU only started its teaching activities in February 2014. The report should therefore be read as an assessment of the progress we have made in consolidating the quality of our teaching and learning activities in relation to what we consider to be good practice in the four focus areas of the QEP.

1.1. A Brief background to SPU

SPU was established as a 'Comprehensive university' by Government Gazette in August 2013. This was then followed by an intense period of implementation of the institutional, academic and infrastructural plans to allow registration and teaching activities of the first cohort of students in 2014. The infrastructure development over this 6-month period involved purchasing two buildings in Kimberley and refurbishing these to provide sufficient residence bed space for the expected student intake as well as refurbishing parts of the Old Legislature building and the old William Pescod School building to create sufficient teaching, laboratory and office spaces for 2014.

In a parallel process which started before the formal establishment of SPU, three academic programmes were submitted to the DHET, the CHE and SAQA for registration and approval for delivery at SPU in the 2014 academic year. These academic programmes, each structured around a newly developed curriculum were:

- a. A Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) in Senior phase and FET teaching, in the fields of Mathematics, Life Sciences and Geography – this qualification was developed and submitted for approval in partnership with the Faculty of Education at the University of the Free State (UFS)
- b. A Diploma in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Specialising in Applications Development.
- c. A Diploma in Retail Business Management.

The two Diploma programmes (b and c) were structured as 3-year programmes which included work integrated learning (WIL) components in the 3rd year of the programmes. Both diploma qualifications were developed and submitted for approval in partnership with the respective academic departments at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT).

SPU started teaching these programmes in February 2014 with 124 registered students. As expected, most of our students were from township or rural schools and generally from homes that would not have sufficient financial resources to support the fees and living expenses of a student at university. Thankfully and given the small number of students, sufficient bursary support was obtained to attend to financial needs of all our students in 2014. Remarkably, this first cohort of students performed very well in their studies and approximately 80% of them returned to continue with a full second year study programme.

In preparation for the 2015 academic year, SPU submitted and received approval to offer a BSc in Data Science and a Higher Certificate in Heritage Studies. Both these programmes were fully developed by staff at SPU and were completely new programmes to the South African Higher Education sector. With expanded availability of teaching and residence space on the campus, SPU was able to enrol 340 students in 2015. In general, the academic and financial profile of the new students admitted in 2015 was very similar to that in 2014.

1.2 Approach to Quality Management at a New SPU

The HEQC accreditation for the academic programmes at SPU necessarily carried both short and medium-term conditions which recognised that the University was yet to develop the capacity for self-management of academic quality assurance processes. These conditions related to the necessary aspects such as the establishment of suitable teaching spaces, appointment of appropriate academic staff and the availability of learning materials and development of quality assurance policies and processes.

Given the small number of staff at the University, SPU relied on support from the two partner institutions, UFS and CPUT, to assist with oversight of academic quality. Through appropriate memoranda of agreement, SPU was able to ensure that these universities provide support and assistance with implementation of the programmes as well as quality assurance for the teaching and learning process. Senior academics from UFS (for the B.Ed programme) and from CPUT (for the diploma programmes in IT and Management) undertook structured visits to monitor and assess the implementation of the programmes. For the new programmes introduced in 2015, we identified senior academics at other universities and research entities to assist with this task.

During each visit by the external quality oversight team, the quality and appropriateness of the teaching resources were assessed, students were interviewed, student assessments were reviewed and the team provided a report indicating any concerns. Our academic staff then prepared an improvement plan in response to these concerns. The final moderated examinations were also reviewed by academics at the partner institutions.

1.3 Students in University Residences

SPU has planned for around 70% of its students to live in university-managed residences. This is driven in part by the expectation that most students will be from outside of the city of Kimberley (currently 60%) but also by the sense that students benefit from the deeper learning exposure in residences. Where residence places are limited, allocation was on the basis of need, with preferential access given to students from outside of Kimberley or those residing in townships surrounding the city.

SPU has therefore worked to developing its residences primarily as learning spaces. Without repeating classroom lecture or tutorial activities in the residences, attempts have been made to focus on developing improved habits of learning amongst students in residence.

1.4 This Institutional Report for the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP)

SPU did not participate in the first round of the QEP due to the infancy stage of its existence. The discussions that follow in this report are thus based on experiences of the first two years of existence of SPU as a Higher Education Institution and the report should be read with this shallowness of experience in mind.

Senate requested four staff members who have been on the SPU staff since the first academic year, to lead the writing of the different sections of this report. The members of this team and their writing responsibilities were as shown in the table below:

Lead writer	Designation	Writing Responsibility
Prof Yunus Ballim	Vice-Chancellor	General Editor; Introductory and concluding sections
Prof Gawie du Toit	Head: School of Education	<i>Focus Area 1: Enhancing academics as teachers</i>
Dr Erna du Toit	Senior Lecturer: School of Education	<i>Focus Area 2: Enhancing student support and development; also contribute to Focus Area 1</i>
Mr Godfrey Rudolph	Lecturer: ICT Department	<i>Focus Area 3: Enhancing the learning environment</i>
Mr Rathnum Naidoo	Registrar	<i>Focus Area 4: Enhancing course and programme management</i>

This writing team convened formal discussion opportunities with various constituencies at SPU in order to gather and record the university community's views on the different focus areas of the QEP. These discussion opportunities were well attended and we found staff and students seriously engaged with the issues. Wherever possible, both positive and negative comments were triangulated across different discussion groups to give a sense of the general nature of the views and opinions.

In preparing this report, the writing team convened the following discussion groups:

Focus Area 1: a) Senior Lecturers (at least one per programme); b) Lecturers & Junior Lecturers (at least one per programme); c) External quality assurance overseers from partner universities – individual interviews.

Focus Area 2: a) Residence managers; b) Student administrative support staff; c) Academic Support staff in Departments; d) IT support staff; e) First year students: 2 per programme – class leader and one other; f) Second year students: 2 per programme - class leader and one other

Focus Area 3: a) participate in interviews with a & b of Focus Area 1 and a, b, c, d, e, f of Focus Area 2; b) Librarian at City Library; c) Academic Support staff liaising with sellers of textbooks; c) Sport administrator

Focus Area 4: a) Heads of Programmes and curriculum support coordinator in each department; b) Admin staff involved in admission, registration, academic administration and financial aid for students.

2. FOCUS AREA 1: ENHANCING ACADEMICS AS TEACHERS

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

2.1 Introduction

As will be seen in the discussion below, the main thrust at SPU in this Focus Area in the first two years of its existence was on professional development of the lecturing staff. The university operates with an approved document on conditions of service, but there is currently no formal agreement on workload, reward and recognition or performance management. These aspects are dealt with informally and by means of discussion and consensus agreement amongst management and programme heads. The necessary policies and performance management systems are in development and are expected to be implemented in 2016.

2.2 Key issues in enhancing academics as teachers – an SPU perspective

With the appointment of the first lecturers at SPU at the beginning of 2014, emphasis was placed on competence in subject content knowledge (at a level higher than that of students who enrolled in the programme). A teaching qualification was a further requirement for those appointed in the Education programme.

The larger proportion of academics appointed in 2014 and 2015 had limited teaching experience in Higher Education. They furthermore had limited experience of curriculum design or of curriculum implementation. It rarely happens that the intended and the actual curriculum are the same and this misalignment is even more pronounced when academics are inexperienced in teaching.

The approved and accredited programmes implemented at SPU in 2014 and 2015 (except two) were designed at the partner universities (UFS and CPUT) to address the need within the context at those universities. The Higher Certificate in Heritage studies and the B.Sc. (Data Science) degree were designed at SPU in collaboration with other academic specialists in the relevant fields.

At SPU the institutional context is different from the established universities in the country in that SPU has its own unique set of diverse demographic, economic, social and academic characteristics. This diversity, the increased accountability required of new HEI's such as SPU and the need to educate graduates with socially valuable attributes, present important challenges to the teaching and learning process. A critical look into the time and resources needed to develop and sustain quality university teaching at SPU was therefore essential.

As comprehensive university, SPU recognises and values the importance of Teaching and Learning, Research and Community Citizenship as cornerstones in the existence of a University. In its current position on its trajectory of existence, more emphasis is placed on Teaching and Learning because of the national importance of significantly increasing the number of the students who succeed in their studies in higher education. But there is also the need to consolidate SPU as being committed to developing a strong platform of

undergraduate teaching and learning, onto which a research and community engagement profile can be developed for the university. Increasingly, the importance of curriculum development and pedagogy - more specifically pedagogical content knowledge - is being recognised as areas that demands specific skills and therefore focused training for academic staff.

Apart from pedagogical content knowledge and broader curriculum knowledge, SPU also recognises the importance of content knowledge or the “Powerful Knowledge” of a specific discipline or integration of disciplines. SPU therefore recognizes the importance of academics engaging in further and broader studies to enhance their competence and expertise in the subject that they teach and engage with in their own research. Currently SPU does not offer any postgraduate programmes. However, we have an arrangement where academic staff can be financially supported if they wish to develop their competence in higher education teaching and learning through formal postgraduate studies at any other HEI in South Africa. A substantial number of academics at SPU are currently enrolled at other HEIs to further their studies.

2.3 Changes at institutional level towards the enhancement of academics as teachers

In the absence of a DVC academic and a coordinating unit for Teaching and Learning, the VC, programme heads at SPU and the colleagues from the supporting universities took agency to facilitate the academic programme at SPU. Naturally this led to programmes at times working in silos instead of working inter-dependently towards a collaborative and mutually supporting goal.

According to the Memoranda of Agreement (MoA) between SPU and two partner Universities (UFS and CPUT), their policies relating to teaching and learning were used at SPU when the first three programmes were submitted to the different legislative bodies for approval, accreditation and registration. Various policies such as that guiding assessment, guidelines to teaching and learning, recognition of prior learning, etc. have been adapted and further developed over the past two years at SPU. These home-grown policies were included in the submission of the last six programmes to the statutory bodies for approval, accreditation and registration.

2.4 Exemplars of successful changes

Curriculum Design

Academics responded to the contextual challenges at SPU by adapting the modules developed at the partner universities (eg in Biology, Zoology and Botany) to make it better fit for the purpose of the qualification at SPU. The proposed changes were discussed with colleagues at the partner University and tabled for approval by Senate at SPU. Provincial language needs was another contextual challenge that was addressed when IsiXhosa was added as language to the curriculum of the B.Ed. (IP Teaching) on the basis that it is a dominant languages in the region.

Academics at SPU took a further step towards empowerment in curriculum design by themselves designing – under guidance of an external specialist – three general formative

degrees (B.A.; B.Comm.; B.Sc.). The heads of programmes were involved in the design of the curriculums and academics in the programmes assisted in the design of the module outlines.

Teaching and Learning

Although the academic staff appointed at SPU hold the necessary formal academic qualifications, most of them lacked sufficient experience at the time of appointment at SPU to function independently in a Higher Education environment. The need to empower staff was and will continuously be addressed by engaging academic and support staff in professional development programmes. In these past two years three professional development courses were presented by staff based at the Centre of Teaching and Learning at UFS; a workshop on the use of Moodle as a Learning Management system was presented by a specialist colleague from CPUT; a session on basic research and a session on blended learning were presented by experts from CUT and SAIDE. The main purpose of these programmes were to build and enhance the necessary teaching capacity of emerging academic staff at SPU.

Internal workshop sessions were also conducted to ensure that mechanisms for assessment are appropriate and commensurate with the respective level descriptors of the courses. This has been successful as external moderators' reports indicate an improvement in this regard. Internal departmental processes were also emphasised to ensure a more stringent internal quality of moderation.

SPU strives to ensure that all programmes are characterised by high quality teaching and learning and appropriate academic depth. Reports of external moderators of SPU examinations, together with student evaluations and focus group discussions conducted with students, formed the basis for a reflective process around the teaching and learning strategy.

Sessions were held to develop capacity for the design of study guides to ensure closer alignment of learning outcomes, assessment criteria assessment (teaching-learning) activities as well as embedding graduate attributes once they have been finalised into the curriculum.

The ICT Programme at SPU chose to affiliate to the Higher Education ICT Association (HEICTA), a consortium of universities focussed in promoting excellence in teaching, learning and research in vocational and professional ICT programmes in South Africa. HEICTA has sponsored several curriculum development workshops in support of the HEICTA-endorsed Diploma in ICT, specialising in Applications Development currently being offered by SPU, CPUT and the University of Mpumalanga.

A social media platform (WhatsApp) for the ICT programmes was initiated and established by one of the partner universities to facilitate ongoing discourse between subject coordinators, lecturers and programme coordinators on matters related to the curriculum, assessment and general good practices. This platform has proven especially useful in promoting reflective teaching practice.

One of the programmes had monthly discussions on the implementation of the curriculum with special reference to progression and the coherence and integration of the curriculum.

The success rate of between 82% and 90% in all programmes offered in 2014 is an indication that these initiatives are having a positive impact on teaching practices in this academic unit.

In these initiatives the five core elements which can be used to build up a profile for teaching were addressed either directly or intuitively by the participants. These core elements are:

Method which deals with the 'how' of teaching. How to plan lessons? How to organize a learning space? How to structure new learning material and how to refresh old material? How to use skills and techniques so that students gain the required knowledge and understanding? How to assess? How to communicate the findings of assessment to all parties involved?

Awareness which focuses on how much the lecturer knows about his/her students. Awareness in this instance has to do with what the lecturer knows about the students' interests, talents, concerns, personal histories in and outside the university context and their family background to name a few.

Knowledge relates to the subject competence of the lecturer. It also has to do with a deep understanding of the subject matter so that the lecturer can engage with the students using metaphors and analogies that will make the content more accessible to the students without twisting the integrity and validity of the subject. Knowledge also has to do with the comprehension the lecturer has of the important concepts, theories, facts as well as the methods of inquiry that are common to related disciplines in his/her field.

Ends has to do with the purpose or outcome the lecturer has in mind for his/her students and his/her teaching. It can be subject focused but it can also be broader referring for example to what the lecturer wants to achieve in his/her teaching career. Ends can also be noble where for example the attributes of graduates are stated.

Relationships refers to the interaction between the lecturer and the learner. These relationships will inter alia depend on the type of curriculum being implemented as well as on the personality of the lecturer. The lecturer can for example be the driving force in the teaching learning situation or the lecturer can be a caring and accommodative person that provides a teaching learning environment where the students are more involved and responsible for their own learning. The lecturer can also challenge students to become powerful critical thinkers, demonstrating a moral obligation towards the real world inside and outside of the university. A combination of two - or all three approaches is also possible.

In the research conducted at SPU to determine the reasons of student success in 2014, *awareness* and *relationships* were the more prominent elements that were identified as having contributed to student success.

2.5 Exemplars of changes that were not successful

All students at SPU have laptop computers and all spaces at SPU (including residences) have good quality wifi access. This encouraged us to introduce Moodle towards the end of 2014 as the SPU's Learner Management System (LMS). Despite three workshops on the use of this LMS, a number of academics have not fully adopted the idea of blended learning into their

pedagogical approaches and are not using the LMS in their teaching and learning situations. A possible reason for this reluctance is that study guides and teaching approaches were prepared before training in Moodle took place. Many of our academics did not have prior experience in the use of blended learning approaches and therefore did not include the LMS in their study guides and teaching approaches.

Follow-up workshops on the use of the LMS and blended learning are planned for the end of 2015 and early 2016. SPU recognises the positive value of blended learning as more than a strategy for large-class teaching and intends to persist in advocating and acculturating this approach amongst the academic staff.

One of the programme Heads has the additional responsibility, in the absence of a DVC Academic and Research, to oversee processes that will enhance and develop the academic and research projects. This situation together with the pivotal role the academic leaders of partner universities play in the implementation and quality assurance of programmes at SPU, resulted into a situation where academic programmes tend to function in silos. This has compromised SPU's ability to develop a coherent, interdependent and mutually supportive teaching and learning approach.

A further problem is that not all academics see professional development in the area of Teaching, Learning and Assessment as important for their own development in their disciplines. They therefore do not seriously engage with professional development sessions on Teaching, Learning and Assessment. This clearly demands a greater emphasis on advocacy from Senior Management of the university on the importance of teaching and learning and the need for academics to have sustained intellectual engagement with the practice of teaching.

2.6 Promising practices

Some of the programmes have regular sessions throughout the year with all academics in the programme where they collaboratively reflect and engage on curriculum delivery; coherence of modules in the curriculum; progression in the curriculum; student performance and exploring new and relevant topics in the areas of specialisation. A sub-committee of the Academic Planning Committee, namely a Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) was established towards the end of 2015 with the purpose to lead, coordinate and plan professional development opportunities regarding Teaching, Learning and Assessment. Each programme has a representative on this committee and the intention is to diffuse this reflective practice throughout the academic staff group.

2.7 Main challenges

Main challenges flagged for 2016 are:

- the establishment of an SPU library with sufficient resources and access to electronic journals and other publications to support academics in their teaching and learning task and their own professional development;

- to empower all academics to engage with blended learning and Moodle as a learning management system in their teaching and learning;
- to appoint more senior and experienced academics and researchers who will gradually take over the quality assurance and monitoring role of partner universities;
- to appoint a DVC Academic to inter alia manage and lead the development of Teaching and Learning practice at SPU;
- to enhance the role of the TLC to promote professional development in improving teaching, learning and research;
- to encourage academics to enrol for specialized refresher courses, especially in ICT knowledge and skills development, that will contribute to growing staff capacity and enhance the learning of students;
- to enable academics to pursue scholarly research on own teaching practices and to practice the positive lessons of such research - given the unique research opportunity that SPU provides in this regard, and
- to implement a Performance Management System together with a functional work load model.

3. FOCUS AREA 2: ENHANCING STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

A student's learning development is shaped on the cognitive, social cognitive and the psychosocial dimensions. A variety of factors influence the development of students and the factors will differ depending on the cohort of students. Theories such as Bronfenbrenner's theory of "contextualism" and "ecological settings" as well as Epstein's external model of overlapping spheres and influences of family, school and community play major roles in the development of student learning. Student development theory goes beyond this and sees development as a continuous process and each stage as a stage that builds on the previous stage. It is critical to understand the processes of development as well as how and why student support is necessary. Teaching and learning involves interaction and is not a one way process. To make the teaching meaningful the interaction requires an understanding of the kind of developmental issues that each student is likely to be facing. Moreover learning experiences must be provided that is purposeful and related to the assessment criteria. "Constructive alignment" refers to an analysis of "what is intended to be taught; how it will be taught and assessed". Hence, constructive alignment can be regarded as a norm on which quality assessment is founded and that "alignment" points to the fact that teaching, learning and assessment activities should be synchronized to support the achievement of the learning objectives. To ensure that development takes place and there is an improvement in rates of students' successes requires intentional structured and proactive actions that are systematic in nature and coordinated in application.

The literature on teaching and learning suggest factors such as teaching strategies, students' motivation, and student learning approaches to their studies, interaction between students and academics and the social systems of the university that influence learner performance. In understanding the support and development needs of our students, we take into account the fact that the majority of students at SPU come from challenging educational backgrounds and that satisfying the minimum entry requirements at SPU was in itself a significant achievement. Furthermore, SPU as a newly established university with policies, procedures and an institutional culture that have yet to be developed, made this an even bigger challenge. With many of the aspects, especially the physical infrastructure (see discussion on Focus Area 3) for good quality teaching and learning not being in place, the challenge was on being proactive to ensure quality teaching and learning at SPU during 2014 and 2015.

The themes that are suggested for Focus Area 2 will be covered in terms of dimensions that usually affect student's ability to succeed at university. Some of the main dimensions are:

- Understanding the subject matter
- competence in academic literacy including reading and writing information literacy and computer literacy
- effective study skills
- physical health, psycho social and emotional wellbeing

- development of a range of life skills
- material needs including funding, accommodation food and transport.

It was clear at the outset that SPU students were faced with the same problems.

3.2 Key issues that are identified by the university in enhancing student support and development as presented by the students

At the beginning of 2014 the physical infrastructure at SPU was still under refurbishment and construction and the IT equipment to create a 21st century learning environment was not yet in place. During the course of 2014 and 2015 things changed and currently SPU is equipped with modern technology and well-resourced lecture rooms that create a positive climate and milieu for learning. Taking into account the background of the students and the expectations set by SPU for teaching and learning, it was recognised that student development would not only refer to addressing their physical health, exercise or nutrition needs but would have to include integration of their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. This included aspects of their social, emotional, spiritual, environmental, occupational, intellectual and physical wellness – as well as how these dimensions act and interact to contribute to their full development.

In consultation discussions, a need was identified by the students for opportunities where they can be exposed to new ideas and experiences that may be applied to personal decisions and group interaction. In some cases the students felt that their ideas are “cramped” by the lecturers especially when they are intended to be taught to be critical thinkers. The desire to learn new concepts, improve skills and seek challenges in pursuit of lifelong learning was mentioned.

In some subjects the content is an extension of what was learnt at school and in other subjects the content knowledge is completely unfamiliar to the students. Students felt that they are not sufficiently skilled to master subject matter and felt the need to have specific skills in terms of reflection, study skills, development of higher cognitive skills and the application of action verbs to be able to meet the expectations set in the various programs.

Although lecturers have consulting hours students felt the need for a facility or support channels that are more available - for example a teaching and learning unit where their problems can be addressed. Being able to know how to study effectively was raised in order to close the gap between school and university. Students’ concerns were that more informal formative assessment should be applied and that it should be on the same level as semester tests to prepare them on the cognitive domain. This should be aligned with what constitutes quality teaching and that lecturers should not only be appointed for their qualifications but also for their “experience” or else they should be taught how to teach. It was also mentioned that the interaction between lecturers and students needs to be addressed in terms of lecturers being well informed and properly prepared for their classes. Students want to relate to and connect with lecturers and peers during lectures and also in-between lectures. The types of teaching strategies implemented should be investigated in

terms of good quality discussions, group work and cooperative learning to afford more effective opportunities to learn from their peers.

Not all students are competent in academic literacy, including reading and writing information because their previous medium of instruction was predominantly Afrikaans. Some students are also not computer literate and they felt that more time should be provided to allow them to learn the necessary skills on a continuous basis.

The issue of life skills was also raised with specific reference to matters like time management, how to open a bank account, effective study skills and spending constructive leisure time that contributes positively to their development. Students called for guidance on the interpretation of exam rules, residences rules and expectations of SPU students. Due to the lack of study skills and time management the issue was raised that tests and assignment must be scheduled at appropriate times in all programs.

The notion of emotional and physical wellbeing was discussed and that the sport facilities are poor or non-existing; the absence of a wellness program to provide guidance on personal issues like HIV, circumcision and drug abuse, balanced diet, exercises and to recognise behaviours that impact on their wellness (avoiding tobacco, drugs etc.). Students also need personal advice from a qualified councillor that can address their problems on a continuous basis and support them to develop the ability to establish peace and harmony in their lives in congruency between values and actions.

Students expressed a need for resource material and funding (not all students have bursaries). An important issue was also transport from the residences because it takes up a lot of time to move between campus and the residence. Moving between campus and the residence also endangers students especially if they walk with their laptops, the security measures must be strengthened.

The absence of good study or learning spaces during and after lecture times seems to be a problem at this stage and should be prioritized. Security and safety measure not being in place at all times prevents students from studying at the campuses. The construction activities, both on campus and off campus, also detract from a conducive environment for study.

Students also referred to the need for a more structured and planned orientation week where they are informed of what goes on campus, what is expected of them and what the protocols are. This should include information on availability of funding and administrative support for the academic aspects of student life.

3.3 Changes at intuitional level that are in progress or at planning stages that relate to enhancing students support and development

Being a new university, the support provided to students at SPU was mostly focused on their academic needs. The academic support was provided by the lecturers of the various programs on how to execute the tasks required to be able them to succeed. This included

executing tasks at the various NQF levels as required in each module or program. In some programs students were exposed to different opportunities on how to execute tasks and respond to questions at various levels of Bloom's taxonomy and apply their knowledge or solve problems. Lecturers were also guided through a workshop on how to set examination papers at the expected NQF levels as well as write appropriate assessment criteria to inform students on which levels they should be able to perform.

The non-academic support and development which involves the challenges associated with every day or life experiences were uncoordinated and generally left to the responsibility of the lecturers involved.

There are currently four "Schools" at SPU: Education, Retail Business Management, Heritage Studies and ICT. Students are not exposed to the same support and development in each of these programs. The reason for this is that some programmes (eg. B.Ed.) include a module on "life skills" which is presented to addresses issues like lifelong learning skills. As part of this module, computer literacy and academic writing is presented concurrently for six months. Students in this module are also exposed to various aspects to develop the cognitive domain through reflection, problems solving, critical thinking and so forth. A core module, SCOR is presented to all students at SPU to address the more every day coping skills. However, in consideration of the recognised learning needs of our students and the positive effects of the module in the B.Ed programme, it seems that there is need for all students to learn more about specific skills to improve their learning habits. As discussed earlier, the Learning Management System is not yet fully functional at SPU, although it is expected of lecturers appointed in the programs to incorporate the LMS into their teaching and to encourage discussions on teaching and learning matters online.

Academic staff in the School of Education also have regular discussions and workshops on issues concerning education matters and how to improve teaching and learning in order to enhance learning in the classroom. It seems that support should be structured in a more organised manner to include all academics. Students were particularly unhappy about the quality of the teaching in a program where "some lecturers read from the slide show or from books" and they felt that the university must employ "lecturers that are qualified and that they must be taught how to teach".

At the institutional level, there is no system in place to identify students with learning disabilities. Where students with disabilities are present they are included in the main stream and their assessments are executed under the same conditions as all other students. At SPU academic support and development are currently left as the responsibility of the lecturer involved.

New plans to support students' "understanding of the content" was put in place during the early part of 2015. This took the form of a separate tutoring program for Mathematics and Geography students as well as in some ICT modules. The approach is that any student may attend the tutor session in these modules but it is compulsory for students identified as being at academic risk of failure.

SPU has not yet developed a structured system for appointment of tutors to support students. In some programmes, the top performing students of the previous year (currently second year students) are appointed as tutors.

The performance of students is monitored in a number of programmes in order to identify those in need of additional tutoring. Some of the students will have taken mathematics literacy at NSC level and are found to be in need of the additional attention. SPU has implemented a timetable approach that allows for no formal lectures on Wednesday afternoons, which is dedicated to social, sports and guest lecture slots for all students. Students experiencing difficulty with subjects like Mathematics will be assisted by their peers in tutorial mode during this Wednesday afternoon slot. Lecturers spend time with the tutors before each tutorial session to make sure that they are suitably prepared to assist students as the necessary level. It is compulsory for tutors to attend these preparatory sessions and an attendance register is kept. Tutors are remunerated for their services at the prescribed rate of the university. Our experience is that these tutorial services reflect positively on the students' academic performance.

The ICT programme recently sent one of its academic staff members to attend a Supplemental Instructor (SI) Supervisor course at NNMU. SI is different to a tutoring program in the sense that it is a Student Academic Assistance Programme that is aimed at increasing student performance and retention. It was strongly recommended that SPU adopt the SI programme because it has the potential to meet the full range of needs of our students, it can be introduced at the institutional level and it is a cost effective programme with an established success record. The programme will be a response to the traditionally difficult courses for which the SPU students may be ill-prepared, given their schooling experience. SI is based on the principles of peer-collaborative learning and the integration of learning skills in a course-specific setting. Staff attending the SI Supervisor training are equipped to train SI leaders (student leaders) as well as tutors.

The fact that SPU provides unlimited WIFI gives students the opportunity to access various resources that will enable them to better understand and master the learning content. The students that are exposed to a variety of teaching strategies, for example cooperative learning and group work, prefer the more learner centred approach to teaching as it provides opportunities for collaborative learning. This type of approach affords the opportunity for students from diverse cultures to work together and provides opportunity for students who may experience a barrier to learning due to language difficulties, to support each other.

The monitoring of student performance takes place intermittently as no computerised system is in place at SPU to identify at-risk students timeously. For example, first year students should write a test within three weeks of the start of the academic year to determine their level of competence, whether or not support is needed and, if needed, what type of support is to be provided.

As academic support and development is directly influenced by the levels of non-academic support and development, it is necessary that the two aspects of support are addressed

coherently. The wellbeing of the students has not received sufficient attention at SPU and students complained about their physical health as well as their psycho-social emotional wellbeing. Students expressed concern about the food provided at the residence and felt that this indirectly affects their learning. Over the past two years, lecturers supported the students in terms of their physical health wherever possible by organising appointments at healthcare facilities. Academic staff also attended to student emotional wellbeing, including cases of drug abuse, by ensuring that students were properly referred to a clinic where a trained counsellor could address the problem. However, SPU appointed a Head of Student Affairs in October 2015 and much of this level of support will be managed by this newly-established office. Of course, academic staff will continue to be a source of information and alert wherever possible.

3.4 Exemplars of aspects that were successful

From the 2014 experiences expressed by students, it was concluded that some of the learning support strategies implemented worked well as displayed in the success rate of the students in 2014 for the three programs. Importantly, the strategies appear to have responded well to the particular needs of this profile of students, in view of their relatively low AP scores, varying from 28 to 33. The course-pass rate of students enrolled for the B.Ed. programme, RBM programme and IT programme was 82%, 87% and 90% respectively. As none of the academic support structures that are usually in place at a university, were in place at SPU, the class of 2014 relied heavily on their lecturers for support. As mentioned earlier, lecturers had to be proactive and focused on individual support requirements.

Students enrolled in the three programs in 2014 indicated that they had positive beliefs that the environment that was created at SPU contributed to their academic success and more specifically their emotional wellbeing (they felt good about themselves). They did however revealed that “learning spaces” should be provided to study between lectures. Students indicated that the resources that were provided contributed to their learning and having a laptop computer made it easier to access new information. Aspects about the learning environment that were highlighted by students and lecturers were the facilities and technology in the lecture rooms; the positive atmosphere in the classrooms that fostered a climate for learning; the interpersonal relationship between student and student as well as between student and lecturer. Students felt very strongly that the high expectations that were set enabled them to engage with the learning content and motivated them. Students also felt that the methods of teaching used accommodated them in their way of learning and the fact that class groups were small contributed positively to their learning.

In one of the programs, students were very positive that the development of higher order thinking (HOT) skills helped them to conceptualise the work and promoted deep learning. The development of HOT were strengthened by the fact that they were introduced to new study methods and concept maps helped a lot, knowing how to plan helped to cover the work in time and being exposed to different learning styles. Students responded and mentioned that they had changed in the way that they used to approach their studies and

setting high expectations forced them to engage with the content. The cohort of students in 2014 felt that personal attributes contributed to their own success because they were motivated, they set goals, they were willing to learn, and interested in what they were doing and if they struggled, they sought help. Academics also agree that students were serious about their studies and they worked very hard. Students also indicated that they applied strategies to regulate their learning which, according to the literature on this subject, can contribute to successful learning.

The feedback students received also contributed to their academic success. The fact that feedback highlighted action points for the future, indicated where they went wrong, provided guidance on how to improve, indicated the essential or priorities that must be improved and that there was a balance between criticism and advice enhanced student learning. The fact that there was a smaller group of students made individual feedback much easier and more effective.

Regarding the assessment practices students were positive that the assessment practices provided, contributed to the academic success and moreover that: the assessment criteria was a good indication of what was expected of them; the activities were aligned with the assessment criteria; there was a balance between what they had learned and what they were assessed on as well as the assessment was found to be fair.

Bursary Support

As mentioned earlier, the profile of students who have enrol at SPU places a special requirement on the university to raise bursary and other financial support for its students. In the first year of operation in 2014, SPU registered 124 students and, with this small number of students, it was possible to raise sufficient funding to cover the needs of all students, in 2015, approximately 330 students were enrolled, of which 220 students were first time entry students. Because of their successful academic performance, the returning students continued to receive bursary funding in 2015. For the first time entry students in 2015, SPU was able to locate full or tuition-only funding for 190 students. This funding was obtained from sources such as NSFAS, Funza Lushaka, National Youth Development Agency, the Bank SETA, private donations and the Wholesale & Retail SETA.

SPU recognises this as an important factor in the academic success of our students and will continue to apply effort in assisting students with the financial needs. Of course, as the student numbers grow, this will become increasingly difficult to assure.

3.5 Exemplars of changes that have not been successful

Despite the fact that unlimited WIFI is provided, all students do not have access to WIFI all the time. In some areas of the residences there is no or limited access and that jeopardizes student learning if they have planned to work at the residences in their rooms. This derives from the problem that other learning spaces are not available due to insufficient security on

campus after hours, etc. Although the local community library has been identified and equipped with a limited range of books for the various programs, it is not accessible after hours. Students therefore have limited access to information in the library.

3.6 Promising practices related to this focus area

- The fact that the new infrastructure will be in place in 2016 will contribute in terms of learning spaces available for students to study after lectures.
- Facilities for printing will be more accessible, making it easier for students to print at more convenient times.
- The appointment of a Head of Student Affairs who can support students with personal matters and refer them to a councillor etc. and to support them on the various dimensions of wellbeing.

3.7 Main challenges that the university still faces in relation to this focus area

Since the university has been established in 2013, many issues have been addressed and improved. During 2014 and 2015 much emphasis has been placed on lecturers to provide support to students in various areas of need. Due to the increasing student numbers and modules that had to be taught it became more difficult to interact on a one-to-one basis with the students and SPU will have to consider the following issues as possible contributions to ensuring that teaching is enhanced as student numbers increase.

- Effective use of the LMS - It is important that lecturers make use of effective ways to implement blended learning strategies and not merely use the LMS as a content holding space but as a space to engage students in an active manner to enhance the teaching and learning;
- Improved students support in terms of all the dimensions of their wellbeing that can positively contribute to enhance learning;
- Identifying sufficient bursary and financial support for a growing number of students
- Increased availability of learning spaces that will provide opportunity for students to study after and in between ng lectures.
- Develop a functional resource centre including a library that must be managed;
- Improvement of security to provide a safe conducive learning environment;
- Well organised sport facilities;
- A well organised tutor system, making use of senior or third year students.
- Proper and accessible printing facilities.

4. FOCUS AREA 3: ENHANCING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Introduction

SPU is keen to develop as a truly modern university in a world that increasingly recognises the importance of accessible and diffused knowledge as a primary stimulus to the future of human development. This means that, within the limits of resources, SPU must ensure that the facilities and equipment available to students and academics for teaching, learning and research are effective and appropriate.

SPU is taking an integrated and learning-centred approach to the education of its students. A learning-centred approach requires the provision of intellectually challenging learning environments to students and support to students to reach increasingly higher levels of intellectual achievement. While responding firmly to poor academic performance, sensitivity towards the external environment and context that individual students are exposed to, is essential.

4.2 Key issues in enhancing the learning environment.

While infrastructure and enrolment development plans are largely in place, the funds to support these plans are not fully assured. Financial constraints on capital expenditure plans can therefore result in changes to academic plans. Throughout the planning process for the development of infrastructure at SPU it has been accepted that SPU will have to provide residence accommodation for between 60% and 80% of the student enrolment. It is not unreasonable when considering the relatively small population in Kimberley together with SPU's ambitions to attract students from the rest of the Northern Cape and beyond.

The two existing residences, Whiteways and Diamond Lodge, have 144 and 62 beds respectively. Both residences are managed by a House Warden. Cleaning, catering and security services are provided at each residence. Each student apartment at the residences has access to a common area fitted with a kitchenette to encourage discourse between the students in an informal way. The newly established games rooms designed for the two residences also provide a much needed recreational facility. The SPU approach to residence management are of the view that residences are an extension of the University's learning environment, particularly for student engagement with the so-called second curriculum.

New developments in electronic and digital communication offer exciting opportunities for enhancing the learning experience of the students.

4.2 Exemplars of specific aspects of the change(s) that are successful

Study Areas and Wi-Fi in Residences

Both Whiteways and Diamond Lodge residences, are provided with Wi-Fi access. In both residences, the Dining Rooms have Wi-Fi access and can be used as study areas. Whilst the

residences have been upgraded with improvements to the students' rooms, dining and appropriate kitchen facilities, laundries and games rooms, security remains a major issue. The dining rooms and games rooms still need to be fitted out with appropriate furniture.

Support for Disabled Persons

Disability friendly learning environments are offered across campuses.

- a) The Central campus is fully accessible for students with disabilities. This is a ground level building with no stairs; access to a slightly raised veranda is provided with comfortable ramping. A single disabled toilet is provided.
- b) The North campus is partly accessible for students with disabilities. This is a three level building with ramped access to both main doors. There are three lifts, which are currently being upgraded. This building has been supplied with disabled toilets; one on ground and two each to the 1st and 2nd floors.
- c) The new campus buildings (to be functional in 2016) has been designed to improve accessibility into all buildings and to provide suitable accommodation in the residences. There will also be physically marked routes for blind. Each building will have a lift which will be reserved for disabled students, the academics and cleaning staff. Eight purpose made ground floor bedrooms with en-suite disabled friendly bathrooms will be provided for disabled students. All common areas will be accessible to these students.

Learning Management System (Moodle)

All students have been issued with laptops and, except for some areas in the residences, all campus buildings have access to Wi-Fi. Moodle as an LMS was implemented in January 2015 to support the academic programmes at SPU. Additional support from specialist staff who joined in the second semester of 2015 in the IT Department contributed towards better technical understanding of Moodle, together with the necessary technical support. Moodle is currently used by academics in a number of modules as the portal through which assignments and essays can be submitted by students.

Classroom Facilities and Laboratories

All classrooms on the North and Central campuses are laid out in typical cinema seating style with standard 2 person student desking and access to Wi-Fi. These classrooms are all provided with air-conditioning and the teaching equipment comprises a lectern fitted with a computer, touch screen and microphone and a variety of plug-and-play points, a digital projector, a document camera and whiteboards. The flat venues and loose desking allows for variation in seating arrangements, i.e. both standard lecture style and group project work can be undertaken in the venue by rearranging the desks.

For the B.Ed Senior Phase and FET at the Central campus, six teaching venues were purpose designed as combined classroom/laboratories fitted for lectures and subject specific practical sessions, simulating an ordinary school type venue. These combined

classroom/laboratories were designed to the specifications supplied by the B. Ed. staff and thus fulfil their teaching needs.

Three purpose-made laboratories were designed for the North campus - a standard cubicle style computer laboratory and two purpose made undergraduate style laboratories for Hardware & Networking and Electronics respectively. Both purpose-made laboratories were replicated on the Central campus for their Technology Practical room, as needed for teaching this component of the B.Ed programme.

The standard Computer Room on the Central campus is used by both the ICT Diploma and the BSc Data Science programmes at SPU. The IT Staff have intimated that the hardware and software systems supporting the B.Sc. Data Science teaching modules are in need of improvement. In addition the security of the equipment in the room needs to be improved. The IT staff have some problems with other general computer laboratories at SPU as they are of the opinion that these are not fit for purpose. The IT Department recently visited the Bloemfontein campus of UFS to look at their IT laboratory installations – suggestions for alterations to the current IT laboratories at SPU will soon be made as necessary. SPU endeavours to contribute to the enhancement of facilities by participating in the institutional discourse through the relevant forums.

Printing Facilities for Students

SPU currently has a centralized printing and copy service for students in a designated office space. A dedicated person is appointed to assist students with their printing needs. A record is kept of all printing and copying done by students and this is charged against their student fee accounts. The printing time available for students is currently under review and will possibly be extended - since the student intake are likely to double in 2016.

Library Services

While the library infrastructure is being developed at the new campus buildings, SPU has temporarily entered into a three year Memorandum of Agreement with Sol Plaatje Municipal Library on inter-lending Library Services. All content supplied by SPU to this library are used strictly for research and study purposes of SPU students and both parties agreed not to supply any material to a third party. In accordance with the agreement, SPU notifies the students once their requests have been ordered and placed in the library. All copyright regulations are observed by both parties. Currently, there is a library catalogue of books supporting all programmes offered at SPU. The SPU library will be developed within the provisions of the institutional building plans and timelines.

Improved Learning Spaces in Formal Venues

a) Renovated Buildings

None of the existing buildings occupied by SPU were originally designed for university activities. Rehabilitation and improvements therefore concentrated on providing the

facilities required for suitable teaching, student accommodation, academic and administrative offices and basic facilities for, laboratories, student catering etc. A review of the currently installed teaching equipment took place and it was decided to improve the quality and resolution of the document cameras in classrooms. New purpose made laboratories were appropriately fitted with equipment for Physical Science (Chemistry and Physics), Consumer Science and Technology at the Central Campus for the 2nd year B. Ed. Senior Phase and FET programme.

b) New Buildings

The buildings currently being constructed have all been designed around specific academic, residential and support service requirements. The buildings are designed to provide formal and informal learning and studying areas, improve the quality of student life and provide an appropriate university milieu. The lecture venues include four raked auditoriums and six flat venues for a diversity of classroom types. All these venues are to be fitted with the latest teaching and learning equipment specifications and improved acoustic facilities and, to minimise the need for artificial lighting, all teaching spaces have access to natural light. Seminar Rooms are provided in all the buildings including the residences. A Computer Workroom has been provided for the residences.

Informal or social gathering Venues

a) North Campus

The existing student gathering areas on the 1st and 2nd Floors are being fitted with appropriate furniture and desks to provide a space more conducive to student gathering and informal discussion. The courtyard is being upgraded with new paving and trees to make it a friendlier outside gathering environment. Weatherproof tables and chairs are to be provided under the trees to both extend the dining facility to outside and to create an outside learning area.

b) Residences

The existing Whiteways residence has been completely upgraded and additional facilities more appropriate to a student residence provided. A paved area in front of the dining room is being established with canopy cover to provide a shaded area for taking meals and for recreational purposes. The garden has been landscaped and safe storage for the student bicycles provided.

The existing Diamond Lodge residence has been provided with an improved dining room area which also serves as a common room and informal study space. The residence also has a games room. The existing external veranda is uncovered but supplied with umbrellas that need to be serviced and/or repaired.

4.3 Exemplars of changes that have not been successful

Library Services

During a recent interview with students, they stated that the majority of books currently in the Municipal library (across the road of the North Campus) are more for the Education programme and that there are only a few IT & Heritage books available to them. According to students, the public library is not well resourced and is not accessible after hours because it closes at 6 pm during weekdays. The library is thus not fully functional from the perspective of the needs of university students.

Tutor initiative in the ICT Programme

The ICT Department introduced a tutor system in 1st Semester of 2015 in which second year students acted as tutors for the first-years. However, there is a sense amongst academics that this was putting extra workload on students as Tutors, who were themselves struggling with their own studies. The department is considering alternative strategies for attending to this problem.

Study Space in Residences

Study periods at residences are normally from 20h30 until 22h30 and the dining rooms are allocated as the open study spaces. This is the quiet time for study and the approach was introduced in 2014. Non-residence students who live close by are also allowed to make use of residence study spaces. However, because of limited space, students are obliged to work in close-spaced groups in dining halls. During the recent interview with students, they stated that dining halls are not a convenient spaces for self-study and that the noise is not well controlled because of the cramped space and continual movement of students.

Text and eBooks

One of the strategies considered for reducing the cost of study was to opt for prescribed text books supplied in the form of e-books. While they are certainly cheaper, students struggled with the e-books and preferred hard copy text books for study purpose. IN some programmes, textbooks were not delivered on time and students struggled at the beginning of a semester.

Classroom Facilities and Computer Labs

Notwithstanding classrooms at the North campus being fitted with the latest audio-visual equipment, there have been problems with some of the document cameras and the provision of the facilities in some of classrooms. The basic Technology Lab on the North campus currently requires an upgrade in terms of PC Hardware and relevant software applications.

4.4 Promising practices

ICT Programme

The tutorial programme assisted students and the department needs to establish a more effective programme, possibly by obtaining the services of tutors from outside SPU where needed.

B.Ed Programme

The mentoring system holds promise and this needs to be augmented with an effective tutor system. The Department is also considering engaging practicing teachers to mentor students when on teaching practice at schools.

Health and Wellness

While there are no dedicated facilities for health and wellness care of student on campus, SPU has informal agreements with health practitioners in the proximal area to provide such services as needed. Where medical need for students have arisen, this referral arrangement has been served our needs. SPU is planning more formal agreements with the local clinic, public hospital and individual providers to have someone dedicated on campus to attend to medical needs of students. A Memorandum of Agreement is also being considered with the emergency medicine unit for campus and residence medical emergencies.

Peer-Assisted-Learning and Tutoring

Tutoring and peer-assisted learning initiatives have taken place in this early stage of SPU and has mostly proved useful. However, the approach has been uncoordinated. There is an opportunity for Peer-Assisted-Learning, Tutoring and student mentorship programmes to be coherently organised at residences.

Computer Labs and Technical Support at Residences

The idea of obliging all students to own a laptop computer has proven to have a positive impact on their learning and it is important that SPU has partially subsidised the student purchase of the laptops. There may be a need to assist students with minimal provision of a computer lab in the residences for students who have malfunctioning equipment or have lost it through theft and do not have ready access to the campus computer lab.

Classroom Facilities

The high-quality electronic teaching facilities in all classrooms have had a good impact on student learning and facilitated the teaching process. This is to be sustained in the provision of new teaching rooms in the future. The ICT Department currently working with Director of Facilities, A need has been identified for video conferencing facilities to allowed shared presentation of guest lectures and seminars with partner universities.

Bicycle project

SPU students have access to dedicated university bicycles which they rent on an annual basis at nominal rental costs. Given the bicycle-friendly terrain of the city of Kimberley, this facility has assisted students by easing their travel between residence and university campus. This pilot project will be expanded and students will be encouraged to use the facility.

4.5 Main challenges

- Improve the ICT Lab equipment to a suitable standard for their teaching needs.
- Develop a better approach to tutorial assistance of students; tutors should be properly coached in the knowledge and expertise needed for each module.
- Develop a fully functional library on campus with access to online journals and other research publications is an urgent need and should be in place for the 2016 academic year.
- Ensure suitable physical access for blind or deaf students.
- Students have expressed concern about the security services in and around the residences and this needs to be attended to.
- Improve the coverage of Wi-Fi at the residences.
- We need to expand the availability of different types of study spaces at the residences and on campus where student can work individually or collaboratively.
- There is a need for copying and printing facilities at residences to meet students' printing needs when they are not on campus.
- SPU must expand its sports facilities and grow student participation in sporting activities.
- Residence management must attend to noise and unruly behaviour that disturb student study time.
- SPU should implement a system for counselling services on campuses to attend to students' personal and study needs
- SPU must implement a student portal on the intra-net part of its website. This should be a portal for students to obtain individual and group information and well as interactions on a range of their study needs.

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

5.1 Admission and selection

Currently, SPU only offers programmes at undergraduate level and to be accepted, applicants are required to have passed the National Senior Certificate (NSC) with Bachelor, Diploma or Higher Certificate endorsement or any other school leaving certificate.

In 2015, the programmes on offer were the following:

- Bachelor of Education in Senior and FET Phase Teaching
- Bachelor of Education in Intermediate Phase Teaching
- Bachelor of Science (Data Science)
- Diploma in Retail Management
- Diploma in Information and Communication Technology (Applications Development)
- Higher Certificate in Heritage Studies

For the first two years of the existence of the university, enrolment size and shape in these programmes have largely been determined by the availability of seat space. As refurbishment of the existing buildings has progressed, so the seat space has expanded and SPU has tried to keep the pace of employment of new academic staff aligned with the increasing teaching and learning needs.

This limitation has meant that SPU has put little emphasis on student recruitment, relying mainly on limited school visits and on the Central Applications Service operated by the DHET. As mentioned earlier, the students who have applied to SPU have generally been from township and rural schools and can be placed in two broad categories:

- Those who satisfy the minimum entry requirements for study at the established South African universities but are not offered a place because of lack of seat space at these universities
- Those who completed Grade 12 two or three years ago, obtained results suitable for entry into higher education programmes but were unable to take up offers for lack of supporting finances.

Because they are a few years older than the traditional entry student at university, this second group have proven to have a stabilising academic effect on the students who arrive straight after completing the NSC. They appear more focused on their studies and often play the role of academic mentors to the younger group.

Given this seat space limitation, SPU started in 2014 with 124 registered students and a total enrolment of 338 students in 2015. The enrolment is expected to increase to 800 students with the introduction of three new programmes (BA, BSc and B.Comm) as well as the completion of the first cluster of new buildings in 2016. These targets were set in SPU's Academic Plan, approved by Senate and Council.

Recruitment in 2014 and 2015 was undertaken by a team of staff members as the University does not have a dedicated student recruitment section.

The Admission process will be reviewed on an annual basis so that the University develops a detailed database on the nature of applicants, their likelihood of successful completion of SPU programmes and the type and level of support needed by different clusters of students.

The University has only two international students presently enrolled. In the near future, however, the University could in all possibility admit more international students and other school leaving qualifications need to be considered. In the recruitment process, the University may well receive applications from potential students in bordering the Northern Cape, especially Namibia and Botswana.

Given the nature of the enrolments, SPU's student profile is predominantly African and Coloured students – more strongly a reflection of the class distribution of the region than of the race distribution. This is a concern because it compromises the principle of diversity of opinion and world view in the student population that makes for a university with a good learning culture. In developing a recruitment strategy, SPU plans to put in place a targeted approach to recruit a more diverse student profile.

In 2014, approximately 60% of the students were from outside the city of Kimberley, while 10% were from outside the Northern Cape. This profile of 60% students from outside Kimberley was similar in 2015. However, the proportion of students from outside of the Northern Cape grew to 20% of the total enrolment.

Table 1 below, which gives a sense of the profile of students enrolled in 2014 and 2015, clearly indicates the skewed demographic profile of the university students. The percentage of white students currently enrolled at SPU is too low and this needs to be addressed in the coming years.

Student Performance in 2014

Given the small number of students enrolled and SPU's emphasis on good teaching and student support, the first cohort of students performed very well academically. Approximately 80% (or 101 of the 124 students) passed all their first year courses and the average course-pass rate for all modules was 87%. Of course, this places pressure on SPU management and academic staff to ensure that this level of performance is sustained.

TABLE 1: Student Profile at SPU in 2014 and 2015

	2014		2015	
	Number	% of total	Number	% of total
Gender				
• Male	60	48	177	53
• Female	64	52	158	47
Race				
• Black	92	74	229	68
• Coloured	30	24	92	27
• Indian	0	0	1	0.7
• White	1	1	13	4
• Other	1	1	1	0.3
Home Language				
• Afrikaans	29	23	84	25
• English	8	6	41	12
• iSixhoza	12	11	32	9.5
• IsiZulu	3	2	7	2.1
• Sepedi	1	1	1	0.3
• SeSotho	2	2	5	1.5
• Setswana	69	55	163	49
• Shona	0	0	1	0.3
• Zitsonga	0	0	1	0.3
Province				
• Eastern Cape	1	1	3	1
• Free State	1	1	5	1.5
• Gauteng	1	1	5	1.5
• KwaZulu-Natal	1	1	3	1
• Limpopo	0	0	2	0.5
• Northern Cape	100	80	264	79
• North-West	18	15	48	14
• Western Cape	2	1	5	1.5
Home Town				
• Kimberley	42	44	130	39
• Other	82	66	205	61

The planned student enrolment for SPU is indicated in Table 2 below. This plan is contingent upon the availability of teaching and residence space as well as a suitable recruitment of academic staff. These developments are all dependent on sufficient funding for both infrastructure development and operational costs at the University.

Table 3 indicates the intended shape of the SPU by field of study. These figures indicate that enrolments in the School of Education are expected to dominate the programme profile at SPU for a few years to come.

Table 2: Actual and Projected Enrolment 2016 – 2018

Year	Enrolments – Infrastructure Plan	Likely target enrolment	Required academic staff levels
2014 *	123	125	10
2015 *	387	875	29
2016	1 387	800	55
2017	1 863	1 400	84
2018	2 100	1 900	100

* The figures for 2014 and 2015 are actual student and staff numbers

Table 3: Actual and Projected Figures: 2014 – 2019

YEAR	MANAGEMENT	EDUCATION	SCIENCE	HUMANITIES	TOTAL
ACTUAL FIGURES: 2014 - 2015					
2014	40	45	39	0	124
2015	62	159	100	17	338
PROJECTED FIGURES: 2016 – 2019					
2016	186	302	202	107	797
2017	319	563	334	170	1 386
2018	427	767	432	276	1 902
2019	558	1 059	559	332	2 508

5.2 Placement

All applications for a particular programme are scanned by the Programme Heads, taking into account the achievement levels in the selected NSC subjects and the Admissions Points Score, which is calculated as from the scoring arrangement shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Arrangement for determining the Admissions Points Score of applicants to SPU

NSC Achievement Level	NSC %	SPU Points Score	Additional points for Mathematics and Language (HL)	Points for Life Orientation
8	90 – 100	8	+2	4
7	80 – 89	7	+2	3
6	70 – 79	6	+2	2
5	60 – 69	5	+2	1
4	50 – 59	4	+1	0
3	40 – 49	3	+1	0
2	30 – 39	2	0	0
1	0 - 29	1	0	0

Applicants are encouraged to apply for more than one programme of study and, if the applicant is not successful for entry into the first choice programme, the second and subsequent choices are considered and an offer is made if the applicant satisfies the requirements and space remains available. Every effort is made to ensure that students are correctly placed and the good pass rates in 2014 is testimony to this issue to some extent.

5.3 Re-admission of students

With regard to progression of students, Senate sets faculty/programme specific re-admission requirements. Senate has the discretion to refuse re-admission to students who fail to meet the requirements for progression to the next year of study. Students, however, have the opportunity to appeal and the process looks at individual cases and a recommendation is made accordingly. Currently, the appeals are made to the Registrar who refers the matter to the Re-admission Committee for a final decision. If a student is permitted to renew his/her registration by the Re-admission Committee, Senate may determine specific conditions attached to the re-admission of the student. This Committee is essentially a Committee of Senate and as such, their decision shall be final.

5.4 Throughput rates

SPU is unable to comment fully under this section, as we have yet to see graduates emerging from our programmes. However, the very good progression rates that our students are achieving allows us to be positive about our future throughput rates. This is an area that we will keenly monitor as the University grows.

5.5 Management information systems (MIS)

Currently the University does not utilise any specific Management Information System. In the interim, however, the Heads of academic programmes maintain their own records for identifying and responding to the needs of students at risk. In the near future, it is envisaged

that the University would be able to set up a system of data analytics that this better able to analyse the data on student performance to provide management with an instrument for more agile responses to the learning needs of students. There is also a need to review the various customisations to the current database system to produce the necessary reports at the appropriate time to allow such agile responses.

6. CLOSURE

Sol Plaatje University is approaching the end of its second academic year and must be viewed as a fledgling university that is still trying to find its path and consolidate its intellectual posture. While many problems and issues have yet to be resolved, we are confident that the University is being guided by the correct academic principles which, in consideration of teaching and learning, may be stated as:

- To develop our students as successful graduates who are critically engaged citizens as well as being properly educated in the craft and practice of their chosen disciplines;
- To use this early period in the development of the University to consolidate an engaged culture of teaching and learning amongst academic and administrative staff that makes appropriately high demands on the intellectual performance of our students while ensuring that they are properly supported, in all aspects of their University experience, to be able to successfully rise to the level of these demands
- To develop a university whose reputation for the high quality of its approach to teaching and learning is acknowledged by our higher education peers
- To develop the research profile of the academic staff, individually and collectively, that is both supported by and further develops a solid foundation of good teaching culture and practice

These guiding principles have been helpful in helping us decide on the operational priorities of the University in these early stages of its growth. SPU remains positive that these will continue to be guiding principles as the University matures and takes its place amongst the higher education institutions that are respected for the high quality of their academic activities.