

## Quality Enhancement Project

### Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Submission: Phase 1

<b>Name of Institution</b>	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU)
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Features of NMMU Context that are Most Salient to the Success of Our Students

### 1.1.1 Institutional Profile

NMMU's vision is *to be a dynamic African university recognised for leadership in generating cutting-edge knowledge for a sustainable future.*

NMMU is constituted of seven faculties located across six campuses, five in Port Elizabeth (Eastern Cape) and one in George (Western Cape). As a comprehensive university, NMMU provides a diverse range of educational opportunities across general-formative, professional/vocational and career-oriented academic programmes, and is ideally positioned to facilitate the integration of post-school education and training via alternative access routes such as access assessment, articulation and recognition of prior learning. These programmes, together with our co-curricular activities, provide our students with a holistic learning experience, both within and beyond the classroom, to develop the necessary professional competence and capacity to navigate the challenges of life and work as responsible citizens of the twenty-first century.

NMMU is a medium-sized university as the student complement averages between 25,000 and 26,000 and the average permanent staff complement is 1,699. NMMU is largely a contact university – in 2013 there were 25,301 contact students and 1,060 students enrolled in distance programmes. Furthermore, NMMU is predominantly a non-residential university in that only 1,417 (i.e., 6%) of its students live in university residences and the majority of our students commute to university. Eighty percent of NMMU students come from the largely rural Eastern Cape, which is the poorest province in South Africa with the poorest matric pass rate, and about a third of our students are first generation students.

NMMU is deeply committed to equity and redress in terms of access to university studies and equity of outcomes. To this end NMMU has adopted an “access for success” approach and has a number of mechanisms in place in this regard (see sections 3 and 5). NMMU's approach to student success can best be conceptualised as being embedded in a ‘lifecycle approach’. Consequently, student support and development is linked to the main stages of the student lifecycle, namely:

- a. Pre-entry advice and career/programme guidance.
- b. Admissions, registration and orientation.
- c. Negotiating the first year of studies
- d. Progressing through the study programme
- e. Preparing for the world of work and life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

NMMU is further committed to approaching the three missions of a university (i.e., teaching and learning, research and engagement) in a scholarly way and staff members are encouraged to increasingly integrate their scholarly work across the three missions in meaningful ways.

### 1.1.2 Strategic Plan

The following extracts from p. 30 to 39 of NMMU's *Vision 2020 Strategic Planning Framework* relates *inter alia* to student success and teaching development:

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: Create and sustain a responsive learning environment conducive to excellence in teaching and learning and fostering holistic student success**

*By 2020, the teaching and learning environment at NMMU is characterised by students and staff being challenged to strive for excellence and success through an emphasis on a humanising pedagogy; setting high expectations for achievement while also providing high support; supporting students to progressively assume responsibility for their own learning; and providing complementary learning experiences outside of the classroom to holistically develop students. Staff are empowered to engage in critical reflection of their teaching, learning, facilitation, and assessment practices to produce scholarly outputs that are appropriately recognised and rewarded.*

**Strategic Goals**

1. Cultivate an ethos of learning in which all students feel welcome and valued and are simultaneously empowered and challenged to strive for excellence and success.
2. Promote the use of effective teaching, learning and assessment practices, including technology-assisted learning, to actively engage students in learning.
3. Create seamless learning environments to holistically support and develop student learning in- and outside the classroom.
4. Promote ongoing professional staff development with respect to teaching practices.
5. Create and sustain up-to-date learning, teaching and social environments.

### 1.1.3 Teaching and Learning Vision and Approach

**“we are educating students for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century”**  
(*Vision 2020 NMMU Story*)

To achieve this vision a humanising pedagogical approach is promoted in all teaching and learning endeavours and humanising practices in our administrative and support functions.

Drawing on the work of Bartolomé, Salazar<sup>1</sup> (2013) reflects *inter alia* that “a humanizing pedagogy builds on the sociocultural realities of students’ lives, examines the sociohistorical and political dimensions of education, and casts students as critically engaged, active participants in the co-construction of knowledge” (p. 128).

A unique teaching and learning “blend” is being created as NMMU staff and students grapple with and grow into practicing a humanising pedagogical approach. Some of the key features of the *NMMU blend* that are becoming increasingly evident in our teaching and learning practices are:

- Lecturers and students taking co-responsibility for learning and co-constructing knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> Salazar, M.C. (2013). A humanizing pedagogy: Reinventing the principles and practice of education as a journey toward liberation. *Review of Research in Education*, 37, p. 121-148. <http://rre.sagepub.com/content/37/1/121>

- Lecturers focusing on what students can do (their capabilities) and the cultural and knowledge resources they bring with them, and holding high expectations for what students can achieve.
- Fostering active and collaborative learning – to actively engage learners in meaning making of course material and to do so together with the lecturer and peers – in the process they are enriched and their thinking expanded and their Sense of Self develops.
- Flexibly blending face-to-face and technology mediated learning opportunities.
- Flexibly blending learning experiences inside and beyond the lecture venue to enhance applied learning, the development of our desired graduate attributes and to prepare students for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Developing transformative curricula and learning experiences.
- Adopting a scholarly approach to teaching and learning.

Among the key enablers of the *NMMU teaching and learning blend* are:

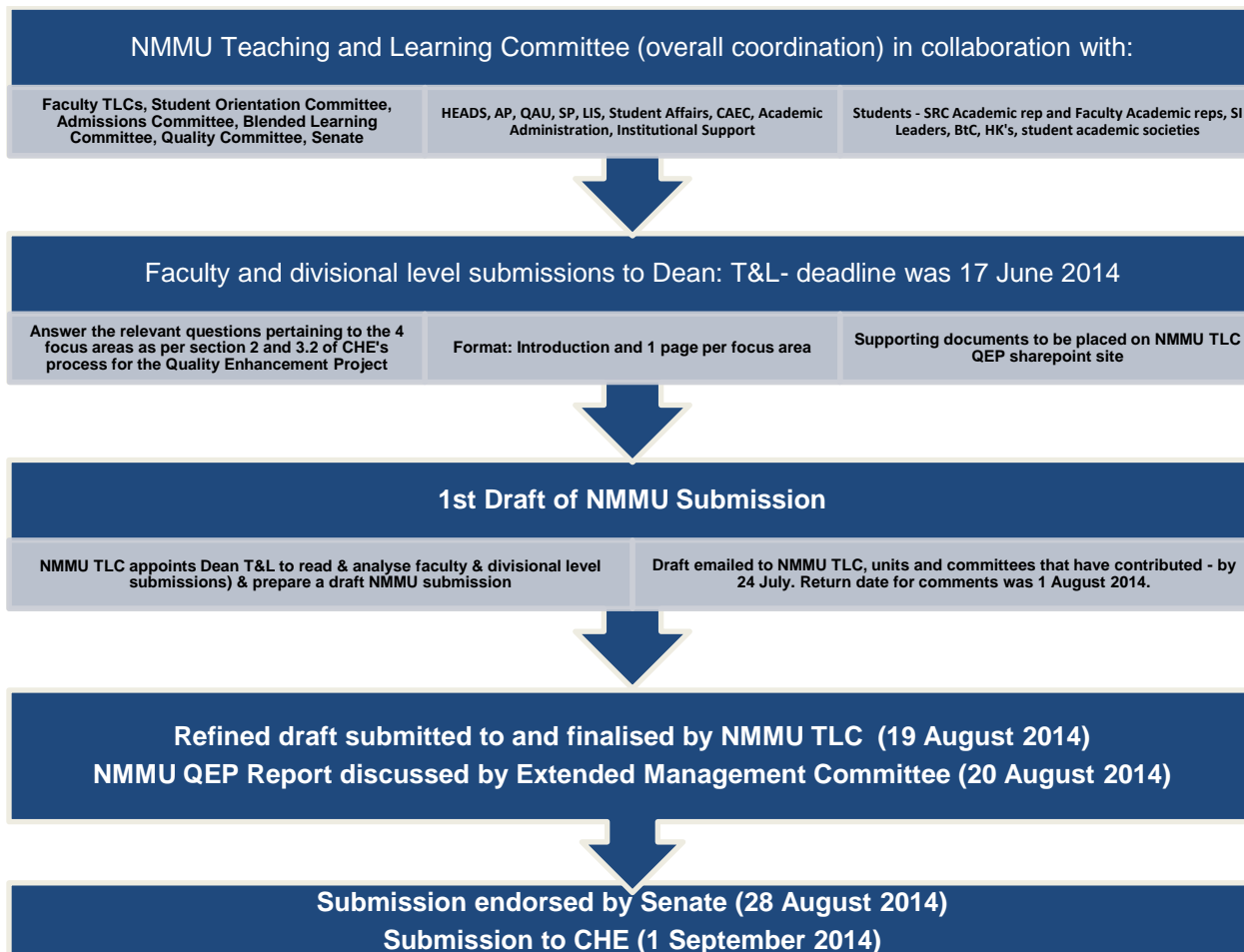
- Creating opportunities to empower academics and professional staff to enhance their teaching practice and facilitation of learning.
- Recognising teaching and learning excellence.
- Creating spaces and funding to stimulate teaching innovation and curriculum and to share the outcomes of this work.
- Leveraging the strong peer learning culture at NMMU to provide all students with quality small group learning experiences.
- Availability of data to inform the nature and impact of the various initiatives aimed at enhancing student success.

## **1.2 Preparation of Submission**

### **1.2.1 Process followed**

NMMU embarked on a collaborative, institution-wide process to develop a submission that covers the four focus areas. The process followed at NMMU is outlined in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: NMMU QEP process**



### 1.2.2 Submissions received and analysis procedure

**Fifty-six submissions** were received from all sections of the university, namely:

- All the faculties (Arts; Business and Economic Sciences; Education; Engineering, Built Environment and IT; Health Sciences; Law; and Science).
- All the centres in HEADS (Centre for Access Assessment and Research; Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media; and Student Counselling, Career and Development Centre).
- Quality Advancement Unit; Library and Information Services; Infrastructure Projects; Disability Unit; Student Housing; Academic Administration; and ICT Services.
- Institutional Planning (in the form of a research study).

The submissions were thematically analysed to generate themes, sub-themes, activities and good practices per focus area as well as examples of impact evidence. Information gathered was further triangulated with information in annual reports and submissions related to the Teaching Development Grant. In addition, inputs from the NMMU Teaching and Learning Committee and Extended MANCO were integrated into the final report.

### 1.2.3 Evidence of Collective Impact

While examples of specific types of impact evidence gathered will be included for each focus area, enhancing student success and advancing the quality of teaching and learning requires the intentional implementation of multifaceted initiatives and collaborative efforts from disciplinary and multi-disciplinary teams. Consequently, it is impossible to isolate the impact of one specific initiative on student success and graduation rates. With this in mind, information on NMMU's success and graduation rates are provided below to demonstrate the collective positive impact of the initiatives and activities that will be highlighted in sections 2 to 5 of this report.

While enrolments only grew by 0.3% between 2010 and 2013, the **number of graduates** grew by 5.3% on average in the same period, which suggests improved graduation efficiency. In terms of the **total success rate**, this improved from 77.6% in 2012 to 78.1% in 2013. As the majority of NMMU's students are enrolled in undergraduate programmes, **UG graduation and success rates** are tracked annually. Table 1 provides information on this, while Table 2 provides information on the success rates for different ethnic groups.

**Table 1: Undergraduate Graduation and Success rates**

	2011	2012	2013
Overall undergraduate graduation rates	20.0%	21.1%	<b>22.3%</b>
Overall undergraduate success rates	75.0%	77.5%	<b>77.9%</b>
Success rate for Science, Engineering & Technology	75.5%	77.8%	<b>77.5%</b>
Success rate for Business/ Management	70.0%	72.80%	<b>73.3%</b>
Success rate for Education	87.0%	91.89%	<b>94.2%</b>
Success rate for other Humanities	73.5%	78.00%	<b>78.8%</b>

**Table 2: Total Success rates per Ethnic Group**

Ethnic Group	2006 Success Rate	2013 Success Rate
Black	67.3%	74.4%
Coloured	70.3%	78.5%
Indian	76.8%	79.9%
White	83.8%	86.4%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>72.3%</b>	<b>78.0%</b>

While there are differential success rates across the groups, there has been an encouraging increase in the success rates of black and coloured students in particular.

## **2. FOCUS AREA 1: ENHANCING ACADEMICS AS TEACHERS**

### **2.1 Aspects of NMMU's Strategic Plan related to this focus area**

An extract from NMMU's Vision 2020 Strategic Framework related to student success and teaching and learning development is provided in sub-section 1.1.2 and NMMU's teaching and learning vision and approach is described in sub-section 1.1.3. It should also be noted that teaching and learning development is also addressed in the *NMMU 2020 Story* (academic plan) and NMMU's *Teaching and Learning Policy*.

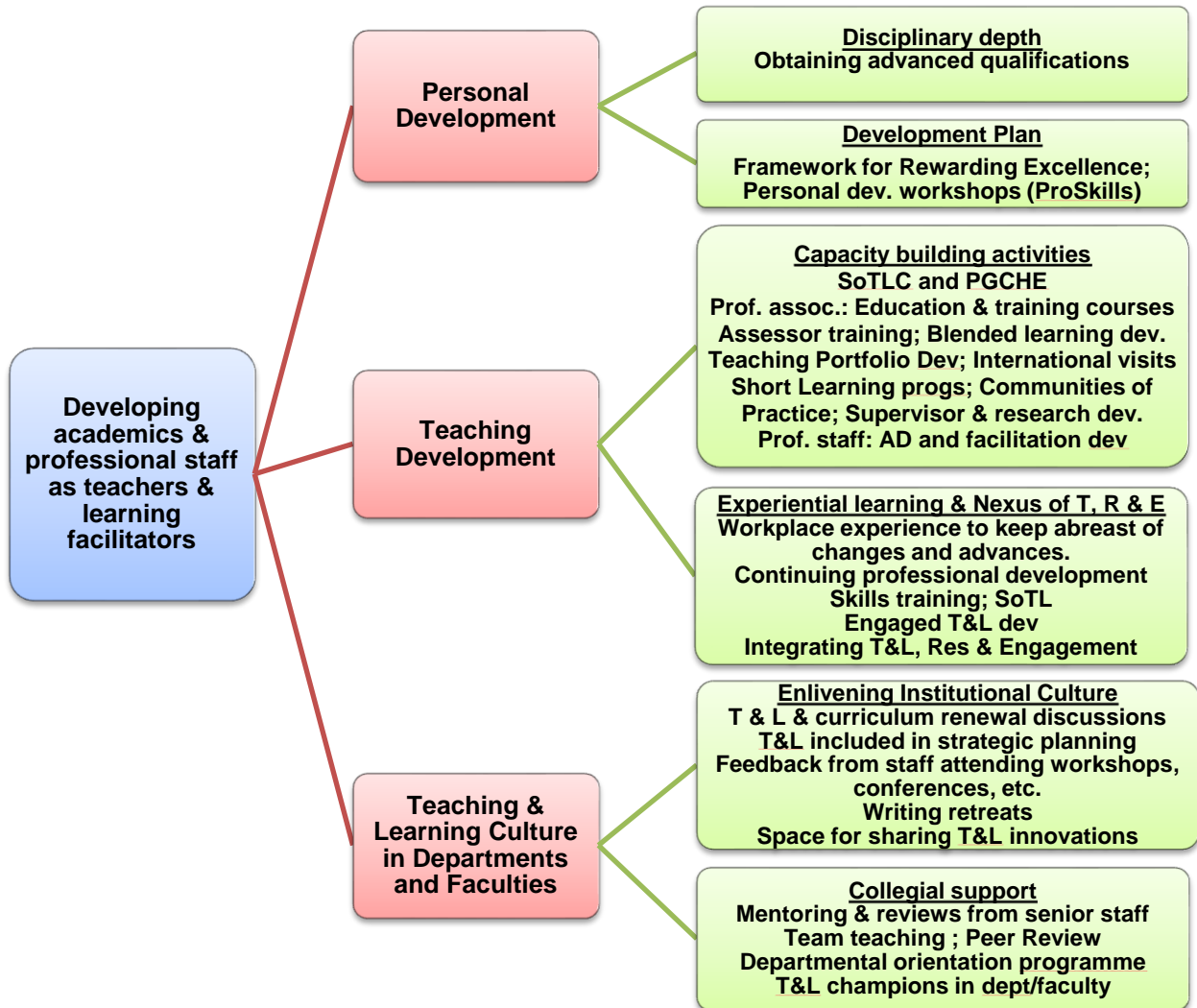
In subsection 2.2 activities that are in place and are successful will be discussed. However, it should be noted that some of these activities will also be listed in sub-sections 2.3 and 2.4 as refinement and better resourcing will enhance them.

### **2.2 Activities currently in place related to this focus area that are successful and evidence to substantiate that they are successful**

#### **2.2.1 Themes Related to Developing Academics and Professional Staff**

A thematic analysis of the submissions received was undertaken to identify activities related to teacher and facilitation development. Three main themes emerged, each with a number of sub-themes. These are depicted in Figure 2.

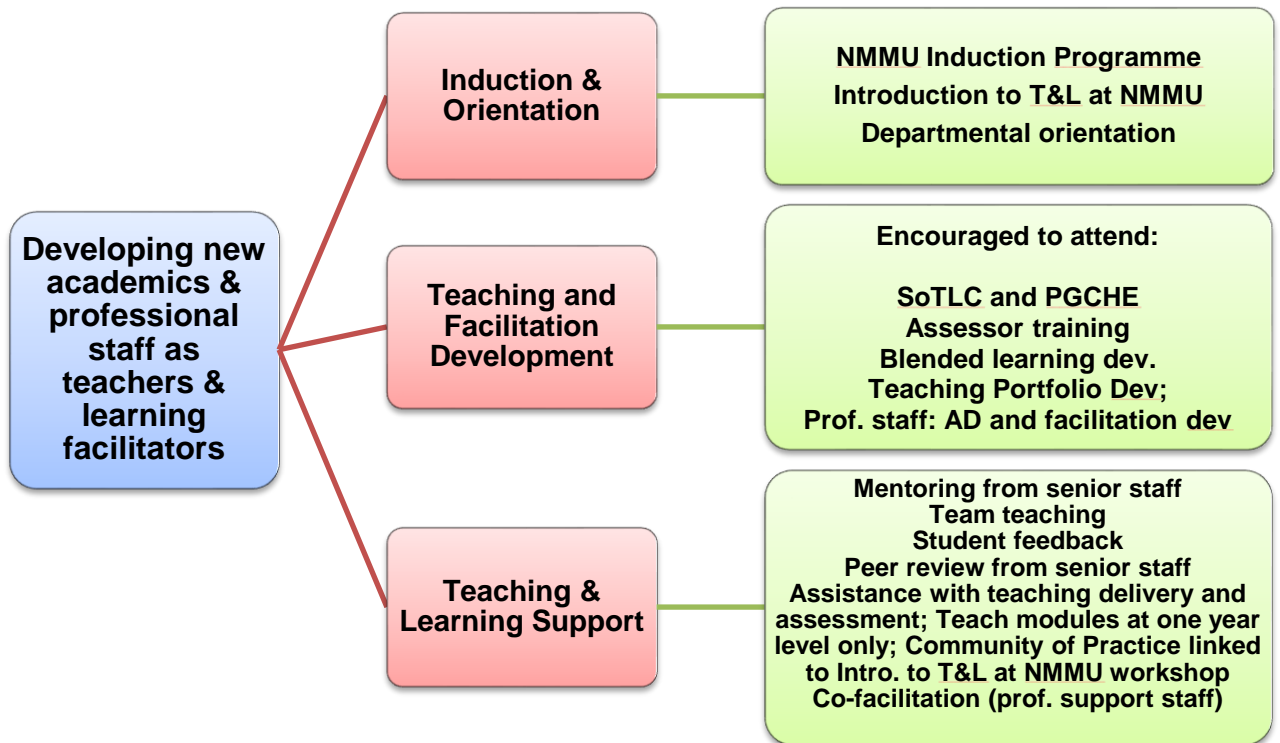
**Figure 2:**  
**Themes and Activities Related to Enhancing Academics and Professional staff as Teachers and Learning Facilitators**



The development of new academic and professional staff was a further key aspect that emerged. Given the emphasis placed on this in the submissions, this was analysed further and three themes and the activities under them were identified. This is depicted in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:  
Themes and Activities Related to Developing New Academics and Professional staff  
as Teachers and Learning Facilitators**



### Impact Evidence

Evidence regarding the impact of teaching and learning development currently takes the form of:

- Increased success rates
- Increased research outputs
- Increased UG and PG graduation rates
- Teaching excellence awards made
- CPD units obtained
- Evaluation of workshops/training
- Analysis of teaching portfolios and reflections of academics (some of which might be undertaken in the FRE reviews)
- Student feedback, feedback from tutors and SI leaders, and peer reviews
- Narrative reflections and anecdotal observations
- Minutes of meetings and annual reports of T&L in faculties and institutionally.
- Number of SoTL-related research studies completed (published or internal reports) and other T&L scholarly outputs
- Longitudinal/cohort studies combining quantitative and qualitative information
- LSSE and SASSE results.

NMMU recognises that it needs to explore additional ways to gather and analyse data to provide more comprehensive evidence of the impact of teaching and learning facilitation development. Nonetheless, some evidence is provided below by way of example.

Examples of **quantitative evidence** are:

1. **SoTLC:** The total number of academics participating in SoTLC sessions in 2012 was 164 and 191 participated in 2013. The largest numbers of participants in 2013 were from the Faculty of Science and 17 academics attended the full range of 7 topics required for certification, bringing the total to 22 staff members that have obtained certification to date.
2. **Blended learning:** From 31 March 2012 to 30 October 2013 the number of modules that have a site on i-Learn (NMMU's Moodle-based LMS) has grown **from 508 to 1129**, which represents an **increase of 122%**. **Activities** on i-Learn have grown from **144,308 to 938,752** from March 2011 to April 2013, which represents an **increase of 551%**. Currently a total of **534 staff members** are registered as lecturers for one or more modules with an i-Learn site, and a total of **15,116 students** are enrolled in one or more of these modules. 410 staff attended blended learning capacity-building sessions as part of SoTLC in 2013, and an overall participant usefulness rating of 84% was achieved.
3. An innovative project has been launched in Mathematics modules to engage students actively in learning and provide more efficient feedback. 469 students taking the mathematics for accounting module in 2013 maintained that Moodle provided a supportive learning environment in which to learn mathematics. Students indicated that assessments were more effective and efficient, providing immediate feedback and that this approach to assessment impacted favourably on their mathematics learning. Eighty-eight percent said that they found the online tasks helpful; that it allowed them to keep abreast of the concepts taught; allowed them to practice; gave them an indication of their progress; and exposed them to new and challenging problems.
4. **Introduction to Teaching and Learning @NMMU:** Programme attendance increased from 28 in 2010 to 59 in 2013. Evaluation data reveals that the programme encourages academics to engage with the NMMU context and to adopt a scholarly approach to teaching and learning. The usefulness rating for 2013 was 82%.

Examples of **qualitative evidence**:

1. Some anecdotal evidence from the Faculty of Education which has embarked on a major curriculum renewal journey:  
*"The curriculum renewal process has not only catalysed faculty self-development but has also initiated team processes and research-led experimentation and innovation in a number of different spaces [for e.g. classrooms, teaching practice, across programmes, field-trips and extra-curricular activities] in the faculty".*
2. Teaching philosophies of two emerging excellent teachers:  
Tania Wagenaar (Law) - *"Teaching is one of the greatest career choices. You are able to inspire students on so many levels while constantly learning yourself".*

Dr Hajierah Davids (Science) - *"The students' learning experience is enhanced via group discussions that allows each student to voice an opinion and formulate further questions in a non-critical, non-intimidating environment."*

### 2.3 Activities related to this focus area initiated during the past three or four years that have not been as successful as hoped

A thematic analysis of the submissions received was undertaken to identify activities related to teacher and facilitation development that have been less successful and some reasons to understand why they were less successful. Table 3 contains the ten main themes that emerged, along with a number of sub-themes.

**Table 3: Less Successful Teaching and Learning Development Activities**

Themes	Sub-themes	Reasons
a. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Certificate (SoTLC) constraints	a. Attendance difficulties	Insufficient time due to heavy workload and lack of staff capacity
		Scheduling of workshops clashes with lectures
		Attendance is voluntary and part-time staff are not always encouraged to attend
		T&L development is not promoted strongly enough in faculties
		Workload model does not always make space for teaching dev.
	b. Implementation challenges on George and Missionvale (MV) campuses	Small staff complement on George campus resulting in small number of staff being able to attend
		Lack of continuity of attendees (i.e., different attendees each time)
		Insufficient staff in CTLM and HEADS on George and MV campuses to provide on campus support & dev.
		The full range of SoTLC offerings are not available on George and MV campuses which frustrates staff
		Difficult to find suitable time to schedule workshops
b. Blended learning uptake is slow	a. Resistance to change	Do not want to venture out of comfort zone
		Afraid/fearful of using new technologies in teaching
	b. Time, capacity, expertise and infrastructure constraints	Full implementation of blended learning hampered by staff overload
		Staff do not have the expertise to implement Blended Learning
		Not all lecture venues are technology enabled
c. Teaching and Learning Awards application process needs refinement	a. Teaching portfolios	Teaching portfolios are voluntary and are not routinely developed and maintained by most academics
		Insufficient time to develop teaching portfolio
	b. Cumbersome to apply for	Too much effort needed to provide evidence against the criteria
	c. Self-nomination	Problematic as this makes academics feel uncomfortable

Themes	Sub-themes	Reasons
d. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) uptake is slow		Traditional, discipline based research is quicker and easier
		Lack of educational/social science research competencies
e. Insufficient support structure when implementing T&L innovations		Just-in time support is needed but the Blended Learning and Teaching Development teams have capacity constraints
		CTLM structure imposes some support constraints as student and teaching development sometimes operate in silos
f. Supervisor dev. is slow in yielding increased research supervision capacity		Time constraints to attend supervisor dev. workshops
		Use of senior staff as co-supervisors does not always result in supervisory capacity development
g. Infrequent peer review of teaching		Lack of a review culture
h. Scale up promotion of nexus between teaching, research and engagement		No strategies in place to promote this nexus
		Academics lack expertise in engaged teaching and building research into their teaching
i. Workload model needs refinement		Allows for equitable distribution of work but does not include all aspects of T&L such as reflection, & teaching innovation & dev. and face-to-face and online student consultation
		Workload relief/allowance when dev new progs and curricula not always included in workload model
		Blended learning activities (e.g. time spent developing e-tivities and responding to students online) need to be catered for in the workload model
j. Framework for the Recognition of Excellence (FRE)		Not yet fully implemented and widely accepted by staff
		Perceived as a subjective, administrative process with little reward

## 2.4 Activities recently implemented or planned to implement in the next 12 to 18 months

Recently implemented activities and activities that NMMU plans to implement are provided in Table 4.

**Table 4: Recently Implemented and Planned Activities related to T&L Development**

Recently implemented	Planned
Scale up “grow your own timber” by appointing PG students as tutors/mentors and developing them as facilitators of learning	Capacity building and support regarding curriculum development
Teaching development and innovation funding (TDIF)	Capacity dev regarding building academic literacies and graduate attributes into curricula
Teaching Development Online Data System in CTLM	Blended learning champions in departments
Research study to evaluate impact of teaching dev on teaching practices	Refinement/implementation of work integrated learning (WIL)
Emotional Intelligence (EI) workshops to equip staff with the emotional skills necessary to deal with student issues	Need to focus on developing assessment expertise including the use of assignments for assessment purposes, assessment for learning, progressive assessment, and giving prompt and appropriate feedback
Appointment of admin assistants, faculty managers, etc. to reduce the admin burden on academics	Need to focus of teaching development for lecturers who teach first year level modules and large classes and also in terms of teaching students with disabilities

## 2.5 Challenges or problems related to this focus area that still need to be addressed at NMMU

### 2.5.1 Constraints/Challenges

Eight themes along with sub-themes related to constraints and challenges were identified from the submissions. These are in addition to constraints and challenges reported in sub-sections 2.3 and 2.4 and are provided in Table 5.

**Table 5: Teaching and Learning Development: Constraints and Challenges**

Themes	Sub-themes
Status of teaching and learning	Research emphasised more than T&L and is incentivised more financially
	T&L counts less weight for promotions
Status of professional staff that do teaching & learning development	Professional staff that facilitate teaching and learning development do not have academic status and do not want to be classified as “academic-related”.
	Need to create an attractive career pathway for academic and teaching and learning developers
Academic staff replacements and appointments	Use of part-time/replacement lecturers that are not sufficiently trained is problematic
	Difficulties making equity appointments and recruiting senior staff
	Lecturers close to retirement don't want to attend capacity dev.
	Frequent/intermittent absence of academics for research purposes or to work on a PG qualification disrupts T&L
	Need to undertake succession planning as many staff will reach retirement age in the next 5 years

Themes	Sub-themes
Conditions of service and a humanising institutional culture	One consequence of the merger is that there are different retirement ages, which causes unhappiness
	The enlivening of NMMU's institutional culture is a work-in-progress and care needs to be taken to create a warm, welcoming, enabling work environment through adopting more humanising institutional practices
Teaching assigned and capacity and resourcing constraints	Teaching of specialised modules when staff don't have the expertise is problematic
	Expecting lecturers to develop curricula when they do not have sufficient expertise
	Stipulations from professional bodies regarding who may teach core modules and supervise practical work
	Growth in student numbers not matched with growth in lecturing staff
	Increased student consultations (growth in student numbers and under prepared students) which take time
	Heavy administrative load, which results in less time for teaching reflection and development
Multi-campus challenges	Some staff have to balance commitments across campuses
	Difficult to provide full range of HEADS services on George and MV campuses due to staffing constraints
Teaching innovation constraints	Difficult not to fall back into old ways/habits
	High staff : student ratio means academics do not have sufficient time to engage in teaching innovation and development as well as curriculum review
Impact research and data gathering to inform teaching & learning	Need to identify a range of methods to measure T&L development impact
	Capacity development needed to effectively use data to inform and enhance teaching and learning practices
	Online data-capturing and reporting system to keep teaching development programme, event, and activity statistics up to date (either expand ProSkills or the Teaching Dev. online system in CTLM)

## 2.5.2 Overview Reflection of Teaching and Learning Development at NMMU

There is evidence that the development of academics as teachers and professional staff as learning facilitators is becoming embedded in the fabric of NMMU. There are a number of key enabling factors that have emerged that should be leveraged as well as a number of challenges that need to be urgently addressed to further enhance and deepen teaching and learning development at NMMU. These enabling factors and challenges will be outlined briefly below.

Among the key **enabling factors** are:

- a. Availability of a range of teaching and learning development activities, programmes and opportunities which increasing numbers of staff are taking up.
- b. Attention is given to orientating, inducting, mentoring and developing new academics and professional staff.

- c. Availability of Teaching Development and Innovation Funding (TDIF), which is increasing the number of innovative T&L projects.
- d. Increased adoption of blended learning which serves as a catalyst for teaching innovation.
- e. Emergence of an enlivening teaching and learning culture in a number of departments and faculties.

**Key challenges** that need to be urgently addressed and some suggestions how they could be addressed are provided in Table 6.

**Table 6: Key Challenges to Address Urgently**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
High staff : student ratios	Staffing must keep pace with growth in student numbers and programmes; or student growth and new programmes must be restricted
	Prioritise and fast track the appointment of academics in areas where the staff : student ratio is excessively high
	Make more effective use of peer learning facilitators (e.g., tutors, SI leaders, mentors) to reduce the work-overload of academics
Scheduling, attendance and focus of teaching development programmes (e.g., SoTLC)	Schedule “blocks” in the Academic Calendar for teaching development during the academic year and towards the end of recess periods
	Provide more online teaching development activities which academics can engage in at a time that suits their schedule
	Focused teaching development activities for lecturers who teach 1st year modules and large classes and for teaching students with disabilities
	Increased focus on curriculum development capacity building and providing time for curriculum review and renewal <sup>2</sup>
	Appoint a teaching developer in HEADS on the George campus
	Showcase teaching and learning innovations at NMMU to enthuse academics and create the intrinsic motivation for them to want to develop their teaching practice and grapple with what the (changing) role of an academic is
	Create a “marketplace of ideas” and other innovative spaces for academic academics to share practices and ideas (online and face-to-face)
	Include discipline-based offering of some SoTLC topics (e.g., use T&L excellence award winners, external T&L experts in the STEM field)
	Encourage the formation of more communities of practice
	Include the attendance of teaching development activities in the contracts of part-time and contract lecturers
Workload model	Refine workload model to include aspects related to T&L that are not currently in it
Enhancing the status and importance of SoTL	Expand the number of projects receiving Teaching Dev. and Innovation Funding
	Create more ‘spaces’ to showcase NMMU examples of scholarly outputs related to teaching and assessment innovation
	Create an online repository of innovative T&L scholarly initiatives
	Hold SoTL retreats to conceptualise research projects & write them up

<sup>2</sup> Students perceive that urgent attention must be given to curriculum renewal and the development of relevant curricula to enhance the learning experience and student success at NMMU

Challenge	Suggestions
Enhancing the adoption of a blended learning approach	Increase the capacity of the Blended Learning Team, with the appointment of learning designers being a priority
	Consider establishing a Blended Learning/Teaching Innovation Centre to more coherently drive NMMU's blended learning strategies
	Make greater use of student assistants to design e-tivities, upload information on i-Learn, motivate students to engage in online learning
	Create more 'spaces' to showcase examples of blended learning
	Scale up the number of technology-enabled lecture venues and ensure that appropriate technical and technology support is available
Revising aspects of the Teaching and Learning Excellence Awards	Refine the nature of submissions
	Add a collegial nomination process while still retaining self-nomination
	Encourage academics to routinely develop & update their teaching portfolios
T&L development staff	Revisit the status of professional staff involved with T&L development/facilitation
	Develop career pathways and training opportunities for professional T&L development/facilitation staff

### 3. FOCUS AREA 2: ENHANCING STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

#### 3.1 Aspects of NMMU's Strategic Plan that relate to this focus area

An extract from NMMU's Vision 2020 Strategic Framework related to student success is provided in sub-section 1.1.2. Furthermore, NMMU's teaching and learning vision and approach (see 1.1.3) are focused on enhancing student success. It should also be noted NMMU's commitment to enhancing student success is also addressed in the *NMMU 2020 Story* (academic plan) and NMMU's *Teaching and Learning Policy*.

In subsection 3.2 activities that are in place and are successful will be presented. However, it should be noted that some of these activities will also be listed in sub-sections 3.3 and 3.4 as refinement and better resourcing will enhance them. NMMU emphasises that students need to take co-responsibility with lecturers for the quality of their learning experience and success. Not only does this help students to be accountable for their learning, but, integral to a humanizing pedagogy approach is that it is "fostered through problem-posing education where students are coinvestigators in dialogue with their teachers" (Salazar<sup>3</sup>, 2013, p. 127). Thus, in listing key student enhancement opportunities below, some of the success of such opportunities relates to the extent to which students engage in them and are committed to working hard to succeed. Furthermore, as NMMU focuses on the holistic development of its students, the enhancement opportunities listed below will focus on academic, personal and employability aspects.

<sup>3</sup> Salazar, M.C. (2013). A humanizing pedagogy: Reinventing the principles and practice of education as a journey toward liberation. *Review of Research in Education*, 37, p. 121-148. <http://rre.sagepub.com/content/37/1/121>



### 3.2 Activities currently in place related to this focus area that are successful and evidence to substantiate that they are successful

A thematic analysis of the submissions received as well as the findings of a recent NMMU study into the factors related to first-year student success was undertaken. The following four overarching themes emerged:

- Academic literacies development and learning enhancement integrated with/ embedded in programmes/modules
- Academic literacies development and learning enhancement : Outside of formal classes/modules
- Personal, professional and leadership development, enhancement and support
- Employability, career and citizenship preparation

A list of enhancing activities/opportunities and the nature of the evidence gathered for each one is included in Table 7. Please note that the list is not exhaustive, as more emphasis was given to institution-wide examples than activities in specific academic departments.

**Table 7: Successful Student Success Enhancement Activities**

Overarching Themes	Enhancing Activities/Opportunities	Examples of Evidence
Academic literacies development and learning enhancement integrated with/ embedded in progs./modules	<b>Peer-assisted learning facilitated opportunities:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Face-to-Face:</b> Supplemental Instruction (SI); Tutorials; Practicals; Group mentorship programmes; Thuthuka programme (accounting); coaching provided by senior students</li> <li>• <b>Online:</b> e-PAL, e-tutoring (in some depts.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance statistics</li> <li>• Module success rates</li> <li>• Online activity and e-tivities</li> <li>• Student and lecturer feedback</li> </ul>
	<b>Extended Programmes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on academic literacies development, especially in Academic and Life Management modules</li> <li>• Mentoring offered by lecturers and senior students in first two yrs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrolment statistics</li> <li>• Success rates</li> <li>• Student feedback</li> </ul>
	<b>Writing and academic literacies development and integration</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing Centre academic dev. professionals collaborate with lecturers to embed writing-to-learn, academic integrity &amp; academic literacies into curricula</li> <li>• DALs lecturers collaborate with discipline-lecturers to embed and enhance writing across the curriculum</li> <li>• Inclusion of credit-bearing modules with academic literacy and/or English for academic purposes focus in programmes.</li> <li>• Bilingual tutorials in Communication modules</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success rates</li> <li>• Student and lecturer feedback</li> </ul>
	<b>Learning materials and Online resources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multilingual glossaries</li> <li>• Study Guides/Materials up-to-date and relevant</li> <li>• Materials, videos and e-tivities on module sites (Sharepoint and i-Learn Moodle LMS)</li> <li>• Use of social media (e.g., departmental Facebook page and use of Twitter)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success rates</li> <li>• Student and lecturer feedback</li> <li>• Number of online hits and downloads</li> <li>• Activity patterns on i-Learn (Moodle LMS)</li> </ul>
	<b>Teaching methods and approaches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster active and collaborative learning</li> <li>• Foster collaborative questioning and meaning making</li> <li>• Facilitate preparation for lectures</li> <li>• Foster independent learning and critical reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SASSE and LEC results</li> <li>• Student feedback</li> <li>• Peer reviews</li> <li>• Student success rates</li> </ul>

Overarching Themes	Enhancing Activities/Opportunities	Examples of Evidence
	<p><b>Assessment for learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using ongoing, formative and progressive assessment</li> <li>Providing appropriate and 'usable' feedback</li> <li>Encouraging peer- and self-evaluation of work</li> <li>Use scaffolding to develop assignment-writing</li> </ul> <p><b>Throughput initiatives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summer/Winter Schools are offered in some modules for students who have failed a module.</li> </ul> <p><b>Mentoring and coaching by lecturers</b> to individual/groups of students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SASSE and LEC results</li> <li>Student feedback</li> <li>Quality reviews of assessment</li> <li>Success rates</li> <li>Throughput rates</li> <li>Policy adherence</li> <li>Student feedback</li> </ul>
Academic literacies development and learning enhancement : Outside of formal classes/modules	<p><b>Making transition to HE studies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New student orientation programme of which the core is <i>How2@NMMU</i> (academic orientation) which is run in small groups facilitated by How 2 Buddies (senior students studying in same discipline/field as their first year group); How2 Buddies accompany their first year group for the first term, often connecting via social media; online materials</li> <li>Additional orientation for certain groups (residence &amp; international students and students with disabilities)</li> </ul> <p><b>Peer learning opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Residence mentors and living and learning communities</li> <li>Peer helpers</li> </ul> <p><b>Structured opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keys to Success workshops, academic success seminars, annual academic success week (CTLM, Student Housing)</li> <li>Learning styles assessment &amp; enhancement workshops (SCCDC)</li> <li>Individual counselling and development related to academic/learning difficulties (SCCDC)</li> <li>Writing Centre consultations</li> <li>Academic integrity and information literacy (LIS in collaboration with Writing Centre, School of ICT, Dept. of Computing Sciences)</li> <li>Library and Information Services training</li> </ul> <p><b>General Online/Digital resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keys to Success website <a href="http://keys.nmmu.ac.za/">http://keys.nmmu.ac.za/</a></li> <li>Student orientation website</li> </ul> <p><b>Module and programme advice</b> – obtained from HoDs, programme leaders, faculty administration and SCCDC</p> <p><b>Informal:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study groups</li> <li>Exam preparation sessions offered by SI Leaders, Peer Helpers and Residence Mentors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance statistics</li> <li>Interviews with students</li> <li>Feedback from Buddies and lecturers</li> <li>Research studies</li> <li>Digital recordings</li> <li>Attendance statistics</li> <li>Student feedback</li> <li>Success rates</li> <li>Attendance statistics</li> <li>Training statistics</li> <li>Feedback from students and lecturers</li> <li>Use of online resources</li> <li>Number of hits</li> <li>Student feedback surveys</li> <li>Entries on file director</li> <li>Records kept</li> <li>Picked-up in surveys, but no evidence intentionally gathered</li> </ul>
Personal, professional and leadership development, enhancement and support	<p><b>Structured opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Career Counselling</li> <li>Personal Counselling</li> <li>Workshops to enhance Emotional Intelligence</li> <li>Wellness and Diversity weeks (SCCDC, CANRAD and CTLM)</li> <li>Toastmasters</li> <li>Golden Key Society</li> <li>Student societies, Arts and Culture events and NMMU Choir</li> <li>International student exchange programmes</li> </ul> <p><b>Leadership development opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beyond the Classroom (BtC) programme (self- leadership and values-based development)</li> <li>Peer leadership positions – SI leaders, tutors, demis, student assistants, mentors, SRC, house committees, leaders of student societies and sport teams, etc.</li> <li>Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship leadership development programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SCCDC statistics</li> <li>Statistics from International Office</li> <li>SASSE and Student Experience Survey results</li> <li>CCR entries</li> <li>% students involved in co-curricular activities</li> <li>Student and lecturer feedback</li> <li>Achievements of peer</li> </ul>

Overarching Themes	Enhancing Activities/Opportunities	Examples of Evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women in Engineering Leadership Association</li> </ul>	leaders
Employability, career and citizenship preparation	<p><b>Structured opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WIL and SL linked to modules or programmes</li> <li>Internships</li> <li>Student assistantships/employment at NMMU</li> <li>Career workshops (SCCDC and CAEC)</li> <li>Careers Fair (CAEC)</li> <li>Graduate Placement programme</li> <li>Entrepreneurship Development Programme in the residences</li> <li>Talks provided by professionals and alumni (usually linked to specific programmes/disciplines/professions)</li> <li>Excursions and visits (e.g., to factories) linked to academic programmes</li> </ul> <p><b>Community engagement opportunities</b> - Volunteering for community projects; pay-it-forward initiatives – linked to academic depts. and student societies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. students engaged in WIL/SL/Internship</li> <li>Attendance rates</li> <li>No. graduates placed</li> <li>No. excursions and visits</li> <li>No. of entrepreneurial activities students engage in</li> <li>Student feedback</li> <li>Employer feedback</li> <li>Graduate feedback (survey conducted at graduation ceremony)</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consolidated database of engagement activities</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Activities related to this focus area initiated during the past three or four years that have not been as successful as hoped

Generally there is evidence to substantiate that the activities highlighted per theme in Table 7 are having a positive impact on student success and development. However, students and academics note that their impact could be even more significant if the following could be addressed:

- **Voluntary nature:** Other than formal tutorials and practicals, most of the other peer-assisted learning and other types of development opportunities are voluntary. Often students who will benefit most from such opportunities do not attend. Nonetheless, the CCR is assisting the uptake of co-curricular development opportunities.
- **Extent of availability:** Mentoring, or an initiative such as SI, which has a long track record of enhancing student success, is not offered in all modules due to capacity and financial constraints.
- **Constraints in career- and professionally-oriented programmes:** Due to their participation in WIL, senior students are not always available to act as peer facilitators (SI leaders, mentors, etc.).
- **Time-table and venue constraints:** Only tutorials and practicals are formally scheduled on the time-table. All other learning enhancement activities undertaken in groups are not normally time-tabled. This creates difficulties in finding timeslots and venues, which often means that learning enhancement activities start late and students thus do not derive maximum benefit from them.
- **Timing of out-of-class activities:** Often out-of-class student enhancement activities have to be held in lunch-times, late afternoons/evenings, and on Saturdays. These slots are not always convenient for students, especially if they depend on public transport. While offering more of these online is an option, lack of off campus connectivity could result in some students still not being able to access them.

- **Training of tutors and student assistants:** Many departments have training programmes and supervision in place, but not all do, which can detract from the impact of such activities.
- **Asset-based rather than deficit-based mindset:** All students need to be developed from novices in their disciplines to mastering them. Learning enhancement opportunities should thus not be perceived as being exclusively for those students who are struggling (deficit-approach) but to enhance the learning of all students. A mindset shift change is probably needed for both students and staff.
- **Materials development constraints:** For example, developing multi-lingual glossaries is labour intensive and costly. NMMU does not always have the human and financial resources to increase the number of modules where there are multi-lingual glossaries.
- **e-Learning constraints:** Students currently still prefer face-to-face peer learning activities. Lack of connectivity off campus hampers online collaboration and e-PAL/e-tutoring after hours. While many lecturers incorporate technology in teaching, some do not, and not all students feel comfortable using technology to enhance their learning. It takes time and skill to develop and upload e-tivities and facilitate online interactions. Without sufficient assistance/lecture load relief, academics generally have too little capacity (and sometimes expertise) to undertake this themselves.
- **WIL and internships logistics and placement –** challenges finding sufficient and appropriate WIL placements/internships, supervisory and monitoring capacity, and around transport availability and accommodating students on site. Lessons learned during experiential learning are not always fed forward into curriculum renewal and enhancement.
- **Raising awareness:** Given the range of learning enhancement opportunities available (Table 7), more needs to be done to raise awareness about them and market them to students and staff.

### 3.4 Activities recently implemented or planned to implement in the next 12 to 18 months related to this focus area

Table 8 provides information on recently implemented/planned activities/opportunities that need to be expanded in the next 12 to 18 months.

**Table 8: Recently Implemented Activities to Enhance Student Success**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
Bilingual tutorials	Bilingual (isiXhosa and English) tutorials have been introduced in some Communication modules by two academics on a voluntary basis. There are plans to expand this to other modules, using isiXhosa-speaking senior students.
More systematic tracking of student progress and early referral system	Integral to NMMU's Readmission Policy is that student progress must be tracked and assistance/intervention provided as early as possible. Some departments and faculties have been piloting how student progress can be tracked on ITS and then collaborate with SCCDC so that students in need of assistance can be assessed, advised and counselled.

Activity	Description
Student/Academic Advisor	One faculty and a few departments have Student/Academic advisors/counsellors that monitor student progress, have one-on-one sessions with students experiencing difficulties to understand what the challenges are and connect them to appropriate resources/services that could assist them. The development of a student profile based on CAAR's access assessment results and school results and other information also assists faculties and advisors to be able to put students in touch with learning enhancement opportunities at an early stage.
Co-curricular Record	NMMU's Co-Curricular Record (CCR) is <b>an official institutional record to recognise involvement in NMMU co-curricular activities and awards and recognitions per academic year of study</b> . The initiative's aim is to assist students to develop themselves holistically, to develop the attributes required of NMMU graduates and pursue their career and personal goals throughout their university experience. Each co-curricular activity is mapped against 15 learning outcomes to determine the top 3 that students have an opportunity to develop in an activity. When the record is printed both information about the activity as well as the learning outcomes is included. Student co-curricular involvement grew from 30% (2010) to 43% (2013) and 77.5% of students report that it enhances their employability <sup>4</sup> .
Programmes and research in residences	Introduced PASSAGES <sup>5</sup> student support programme; extended mentoring to senior students; initiated a research project for first-year residence students

### 3.5 Challenges or problems related to this focus area that still need to be addressed at NMMU

#### 3.5.1 Challenges and constraints

In section 3.3, some challenges and constraints related to the student and learning enhancement activities and opportunities provided were raised. These will not be repeated here. However, there is an additional challenge that was repeatedly raised in the academic input, namely, **class attendance**. Regular class attendance is a key enabling factor for student success. As can be seen in Table 7, a number of NMMU's activities to enhance student learning and academic literacies development are integrated into lectures. It is thus worrisome that class attendance is problematic and some lecturers are frustrated by the amount of time that it takes to manually check class attendance. A challenging aspect that is related to class attendance is that the majority (about 70%) of **students do not prepare for class**, which then hampers the meaningful engagement of students during lectures as they cannot participate without having done the preparatory work.

The other key challenge is low levels of **preparedness for Higher Education** studies of the majority of our students. Language proficiency, mathematical competence and general academic literacy are among the main concerns. While NMMU offers a number of enhancing initiatives for school learners and educators, the levels of HE preparedness of

<sup>4</sup> Nel, H. & Neale-Shutte, M. (2013). *2013 Graduate Destinations Survey*. NMMU Internal Report.

<sup>5</sup> **P** – Personal; **A**-Academics; **S**-Self Awareness; **S**-Seasonal; **A**-Acceptance; **G**-Growth; **E**-Emotional; **S**-Send off – PASSAGES is a framework adopted in the residences to guide the activities that House Committee members provide to promote living and learning communities and student development

our incoming learners do not seem to be improving. Hence the fact that we have so many learning support and development activities in place (see Tables 7 and 8).

### 3.5.2 Overview Reflection of Student Enhancement and Development Opportunities

There are a number of key enabling factors that have emerged that should be leveraged as well as a number of challenges that need to be urgently addressed to further enhance and deepen the enhancement of student learning and development at NMMU. These enabling factors and challenges will be outlined briefly below.

Among the key **enabling factors** are:

- a. Availability of a range of enhancement and development opportunities (see Table 7).
- b. A culture of peer assisted learning, which provides students with small group learning experiences.
- c. Online and other resources (e.g., study guides) to support student learning and development.
- d. A growing culture of co-curricular involvement of students.
- e. Availability of data from CAAR assessments, LEC, SASSE, the Student Experience Survey, etc. that provide a profile of our students which can inform the learning enhancement and development activities that we should have in place as well as to provide impact evidence.

**Key challenges** that need to be urgently addressed and some suggestions how they could be addressed are provided in Table 9.

**Table 9: Key Student Learning and Development Challenges to Address Urgently**

Challenge	Suggestions
Focus on first-year student success	A comprehensive strategy for first-year student success needs to be developed and resourced, given the problems students face with the transition to HE and lack of career guidance and DHET imperatives to increase access. Some of the activities and initiatives already on offer at NMMU could be re-packaged and coordinated under this strategy, but this will require additional resourcing. In addition, this will require focused teaching development initiatives for lecturers teaching first-year modules.
Voluntary attendance	Consideration should be given to making Orientation compulsory, with a blend of face-to-face and online offerings that new students need to participate in. This will have resource implications in terms of staff capacity and the number of Buddies that need to be trained and supervised
	If voluntary attendance is maintained for peer assisted learning programmes (SI and mentoring) and keys to success workshops, consideration should be given to market them effectively and make use of Social Norms marketing (e.g., 80% of students that attended SI passed Accountancy 1, achieving 60% or better)
Class attendance	Consideration should be given to an electronic system to record class attendance
	At the same time, reasons why students do not attend class regularly should be explored to inform the development of strategies to enhance class attendance
	Investment in teaching development related to fostering active and collaborative learning in class needs to be intensified

Challenge	Suggestions
	Activities to assist students to prepare for class could enhance active engagement of students during lectures. Placing e-tivities, quizzes and tasks online for students could enhance their lecture preparation and instill this as a good learning habit.
Integrating and embedding academic literacies and graduate attributes in modules/ programmes	Build capacity to embed academic literacies into especially first-year level modules and programmes – CTLM and SCCDC can assist and co-teaching is an option When embedding academic literacies, NMMU values and graduate attributes in modules/ programmes/co-curricular activities, an inclusive approach should be adopted so that students with disabilities also benefit
Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) and multilingualism	As language is a barrier to learning, the revision of the Language Policy is an urgent matter as this will direct the strategies that need to be developed to implement it Piloting the use of multilingualism in facilitating learning across a range of modules and disciplines needs to be intensified and researched The use of educational technology to enable multilingualism and access for students with disabilities needs to be explored (e.g., subtitles in different languages in a video) Appropriately resource English for Academic purposes modules Expand the number of professional programmes where students must become proficient in conversational isiXhosa to communicate with clients and patients. This will have resource implications for the School of Languages, Media and Culture
Tracking and monitoring student progress	Leverage the existing pilots of student tracking undertaken at NMMU to develop a framework and comprehensive set of student success indicators and data. Identify monitoring and evaluation methods and approaches for each indicator. Develop a system and software to monitor student progress and the extent to which students take up academic support and development opportunities. Develop capacity to generate and use data analytics related to student success.

## 4. FOCUS AREA 3: ENHANCING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

### 4.1 Aspects of NMMU's Strategic Plan related to this focus area

An extract from NMMU's Vision 2020 Strategic Framework related to student success is provided in sub-section 1.1.2, with strategic goals 3 (*Create seamless learning environments to holistically support and develop student learning in- and outside the classroom*) and 5 (*Create and sustain up-to-date learning, teaching and social environments*) being particularly pertinent to this focus area. In addition, Vision 2020 Strategic priority 7 - *Improve institutional processes, systems and infrastructure to promote a vibrant staff and student life on all campuses* – focuses *inter alia* on enhancing the learning environment with respect to infrastructure development, ICT and integrated media services. NMMU's blended learning vision is contained in "*Blended Learning @ NMMU: The Big Picture*", which *inter alia* includes educational technology, ICT infrastructure and support among the underpinning principles and enabling factors

In subsection 4.2 facilities and activities that are in place and are successful will be presented. However, it should be noted that some of these facilities/activities will also be listed in sub-sections 4.3 and 4.4 as refinement and better resourcing will enhance them.

#### 4.2 Facilities and activities currently in place related to this focus area that are successful and evidence to substantiate that they are successful

A thematic analysis of the submissions received was undertaken to identify activities related to enhancing the learning environment. Twelve main themes emerged. These are listed in Table 10 along with examples of facilities/evidence and the nature of the evidence gathered.

**Table 10: Enhancing the Learning Environment Themes**

Learning Environment Themes	Facilities/Activities	Evidence
Infrastructure/lecture venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six new large (200- to 500-seater) state-of-the-art lecture venues across campuses</li> <li>• The systematic roll-out of new and replacement teaching technology in our teaching venues across all NMMU campuses.</li> <li>• Systematic roll-out of access to and appropriate facilities for students with disabilities in lecture venues</li> <li>• Specialised teaching and learning facilities and modern, well-equipped laboratories (e.g., simulation laboratories in Nursing Science; Moot Court in Law Faculty; HRTEM building in Physics; new experiential learning facilities in Pharmacy and Human Movement Sciences; and new laboratories and learning facilities in the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and IT)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. of technology-enabled lecture venues</li> <li>• New technology orientation &amp; training attendance</li> <li>• Usage statistics for specialised venues/ laboratories</li> <li>• Staff and student feedback</li> <li>• Student success rates</li> </ul>
Lecture capturing and video recordings to enhance Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established a Tricaster live broadcast video production studio which enables easy and creative production of quality visuals for enhancing teaching material.</li> <li>• Using Camtasia to add audio to powerpoints or Educreations to record video snippets. These are then placed on i-Learn and students are provided with a link to access them</li> <li>• Five proof of concept digital classrooms have been setup with the aim of being able to record and/or stream the lecture via NMMU's media content streaming solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service booking requests for the in-studio facility</li> <li>• Client feedback</li> <li>• Student usage and patterns</li> <li>• Usefulness evaluations of lecture capturing</li> </ul>
On campus access to computers, connectivity and computer literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WiFi-enabled campuses</li> <li>• Computer labs – general and department-specific</li> <li>• A Student Device Initiative was launched in 2013 where 476 students were provided with a tablet so that we can research the impact of their use on student learning</li> <li>• A limited number of tablets are available in the libraries for students or academics to book out.</li> <li>• Academics can replace their desktops with laptops, which means they can take their laptops with them to class and access all the materials on it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• User statistics and patterns</li> <li>• Student and staff evaluations and feedback</li> </ul>



Learning Environment Themes	Facilities/Activities	Evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All undergraduate programmes include a computer literacy/end-user computing module and LIS is refining an online and mobile information literacy programme that can become part of these modules.</li> <li>A process is underway to obtain more assistive technologies for students with disabilities</li> </ul>	
Student Portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a personalised Microsoft SharePoint student portal with access to timetabling, results, module collaboration / learning management system (LMS) sites, financials, secure file storage, adverts, noticeboard, almanac, news, events, social media, online forms and study related information.</li> <li>A mobile version of this portal gets presented if the student so chooses when accessing from a mobile device.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access/Usage logs</li> <li>Student feedback</li> </ul>
i-Learn LMS Moodle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NMMU uses the Moodle-based i-Learn LMS and has two dedicated computer engineers to develop, maintain and update it.</li> <li>Academic integrity/Anti-plagiarism: Turnitin has been fully integrated into Moodle (LMS). Mainly used for PG research purposes, but is expanding to UG assignments so that it can be used to assist the writing development of students.</li> <li>Test creation/online assessment: Respondus is fully integrated into Moodle (LMS). It is a tool for creating and managing assessments that can be printed to paper or published directly to the LMS. Respondus provides educators with access to the Respondus Test Bank Network. This network, in turn, allows them access to thousands of test banks for the leading textbooks in higher education.</li> <li>Information booklets (hard copy and online) for students regarding how to access and navigate around i-Learn – this is often included as part of new student orientation</li> <li>There is an increase of lecturers who place quizzes and e-tivities online as a means to ensure that students read and have comprehended the material in preparation for the next class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of modules with active site on i-Learn</li> <li>No. activities on i-Learn module sites</li> <li>No. and pattern of hits</li> <li>No. of students and staff accessing i-Learn</li> <li>Success rates of modules with i-Learn site</li> <li>No. of Turnitin users registered (e.g., 33% increase in users from 2013 to 2014)</li> </ul>
Blended learning training and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blended Learning Gateway on Staff portal provides resources, literature, how-to videos, etc. that staff can access when they need to.</li> <li>Blended learning workshops include in SoTLC and can be offered to departments on request.</li> <li>Small, cross-divisional blended learning team provides just-in-time support, training, software &amp; resource dev.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access/Usage logs</li> <li>Evaluations and feedback</li> <li>Usefulness rating of SoTLC workshops</li> </ul>
Specialised software programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In specific disciplines</li> <li>For students with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access/Usage logs</li> <li>Student success rates</li> </ul>

Learning Environment Themes	Facilities/Activities	Evidence
Use of social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many departments have a Facebook page – alumni also stay connected and can provide information on job or internship opportunities</li> <li>• Twitter hashtag discussions in- and out-of class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statistics related to the number of students and staff engaging via social media</li> </ul>
Library and Information Services (LIS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-Services – moving from face-to-face contact to virtual service provision</li> <li>• Improved e-Access to LIS resources and services via mobile devices, platforms and social networking sites.</li> <li>• E-Learning: redesigning LIS orientation and training programmes for the online environment; e-books</li> <li>• Upgraded and reconfigured existing space to accommodate new services and technologies and student learning needs, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Quiet spaces for research and study and soundproofed group study areas for collaborative work and learning.</li> <li>○ Research and Information Commons established at South Campus Library.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Access to libraries – extended opening hours during exam periods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LIS user statistics</li> <li>• Student and lecturer evaluations</li> <li>• No. students accessing online services and resources</li> </ul>
Study space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual and group study spaces provided in the libraries and the residences. There has been an increased uptake of the study spaces in residences by non-residents.</li> <li>• Dedicated study space available on North, MV and George campuses.</li> <li>• Limited study spaces in computer laboratories (especially during the day-time)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No intentional monitoring of study space usage</li> </ul>
Academic administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The successful transition to and implementation of a single platform to manage time-tabling and facility usage – this will assist in the creation of improved student and staff timetables, improved facility usage and will significantly improve the management information available for facility development planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from academics</li> <li>• Management information related to facility usage</li> </ul>
Residences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of computer laboratories</li> <li>• The expansion of the Wi-Fi network to all areas</li> <li>• The development of large study centres</li> <li>• The development of breakaway rooms</li> <li>• Creating cosy study nooks and crannies</li> <li>• Continuous development of more conducive learning and study ‘spaces’ and environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage statistics</li> <li>• Student evaluation and feedback</li> <li>• Success rates of students in residences</li> </ul>
Transport between campuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development and expansion of the inter-campus transport service, and provision of shelters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage statistics</li> </ul>

### 4.3 Activities or facilities related to this focus area that have not been as successful as hoped for

Generally there is evidence to substantiate that NMMU provides an enabling and supportive learning environment (see SASSE results). However, students and academics note that the learning environment would be even more enabling if the aspects raised in Table 11 could be attended to.

**Table 11: Less Successful Aspects of Enhancing the Learning Environment**

Activities	Reasons
Uptake of blended and e-learning slower than hoped for (also reported in Table 3)	<b>Academic staff:</b> some do not want to move out of their comfort zone and are afraid of using technology in teaching; blended learning workshops sometimes clash with lectures; need more just-in-time support.
	<b>Students:</b> About half of the students do not have access to a mobile computing device which curbs in class participation; many students do not have connectivity off campus, which makes out of class online collaboration challenging; students still indicate a preference for face-to-face contact as opposed to online contact.
	<b>Infrastructure:</b> Not all lecture venues are technology enabled, which frustrates staff; some venues do not have/inadequate WiFi access, which curtails the use of online activities in class; access to computers and WiFi challenges are greater on some campuses (e.g., Second Avenue).
Lecture venues not keeping pace with increase in student numbers and the NMMU T&L blend	<b>Increased student numbers:</b> has led to over-crowding of some lecture venues and a shortage of venues (especially where lectures have to be duplicated or when new programmes are implemented).
	<b>Use of lecture venues across campuses</b> (e.g., North and South campuses) <b>given the shortage of venues:</b> students often have to walk/travel reasonable distances between venues and arrive late for class; there is insufficient inter-campus transport to assist movement between campuses; this is impacting negatively on class attendance.
	<b>Large versus small venues:</b> While there is a need for more large lecture venues, given the emphasis NMMU is placing on active and collaborative learning, the layout of many venues make such learning challenging to implement and there is a need for more small venues for group work, skills training (e.g., in professional programmes).
Insufficient study spaces	NMMU has very few dedicated study spaces for students. Given that the majority of students commute to university and often do not have adequate study facilities at home, more study spaces need to be provided on campus. During busy test and examination periods these study spaces should be open 24/7.
Re-design and modernisation of libraries and availability of books	While the re-design of our libraries to create a learning commons along with spaces for individual and group work is important for learning enhancement, the re-design is disruptive and could impact negatively on student learning during the refurbishment as students do not have/find it more difficult to access to the full array of library services.
	Sufficient copies of textbooks and frequently used sources are not always available in the libraries. The number of students needing to use a particular book/source should be taken into account in the requesting and ordering process. In addition, some books are only available in Afrikaans and not in English. Attention should be given to either ordering English versions of these books or comparable books if a translated version is not available.

#### 4.4 Activities or facilities planned to implement or acquire in the next 12 to 18 months

**Table 12: Planned Activities to Enhance the Learning Environment**

Activity	Description
Technology enabled lecture venues and lecture capturing	About 30 venues will be kitted-out with video streaming and recording facilities
	Media content streaming solution: Allow lecturers to upload either anonymous or access controlled media content. Content can be access controlled down to module group level. The streaming solution will facilitate the streaming and recording of lectures from technology enabled classrooms. The solution will enable distributed lecturing as well as various teaching and learning methods like the flipped classroom.
	Develop a policy regarding lecture capturing, which has advantages for second language English speakers and students with disabilities in particular who can view the lecture as many times as they want to; but it poses intellectual property and class attendance challenges
e-Assessment	An investigation into an e-assessment solution/approach is underway. Included in this is the development of a set of principles and guidelines to steer e-assessment.
	Among the aspects that need to be addressed is creating a secure online environment and whether students should bring their own device or whether there should be a pool of devices used for e-assessment purposes.
	A large e-assessment venue, with all the necessary infrastructure, furniture, equipment and software will also need to be established.
Mobile computing devices and off campus connectivity for students	Intensify efforts to make it possible for all students to own/access a mobile computing device through, for example, marketing the ASAUDIT option of purchasing a device at a reduced rate, advising NSFAS students that they can use part of their bursary money to purchase a device, and through enlarging the pool of mobile devices in the libraries that can be booked out
	Intensify efforts to lobby service providers to give students free/reduced price connectivity off campus
Automated system to allocate students to class groups	The creation of an automated system for the allocation of students into pre-defined class groups in terms of qualification/programme and module choices will improve the flagging and management of facility overcrowding
ICT innovations	<b>Student Cloud storage (OwnCloud):</b> A system will be implemented that will facilitate the sharing of large files between students. This will also reduce the impact currently placed on the NMMU internet bandwidth.
	<b>One drive for students:</b> The Office 365 One drive feature will be integrated with the NMMU's SharePoint infrastructure. This will allow students to create, store and share documents online from any device with internet access.
	A <b>Google campus map application</b> is being developed that allows students to find their way to buildings, as well as highlighting points of interest such as wheelchair accessibility ramps, emergency assembly points, ATMs, bookshops, cashiers, computer labs, elevators, food courts, emergency exits, libraries, post offices, shuttle stops and water fountains.
Open and study spaces	When refurbishment takes place or new buildings are designed, faculties and departments are identifying spaces for group and collaborative learning and for study purposes. In addition, some planning has taken place to create a hub/centre for PG students
Modernising and refurbishing laboratories	As part of the DHET efficiency funding and funding for laboratory equipment, certain laboratories will be refurbished/modernised and new equipment will be obtained

#### 4.5 What are the challenges or problems related to this focus area that still need to be addressed in your institution?

##### 4.5.1 Challenges and constraints

A number of challenges related to this focus area have already been raised in sub-sections 4.2 to 4.4. In addition to these, further challenges are:

- Bandwidth problems which are exacerbated when large numbers of students access the Internet at the same time.
- Security – laboratory equipment and technology often disappear from locked venues. Replacement is not only costly but it can disrupt teaching and learning if new equipment/technology needs to be ordered and takes a while to be delivered and installed.
- Lack of AV capacity to support technology use, especially in sophisticated new teaching venues and laboratories.
- Insufficient stations/points where students can charge their devices on campus.

##### 4.5.2 Overview Reflection of Learning Environment Enhancement

There are a number of key enabling factors that have emerged that should be leveraged as well as a number of challenges that need to be urgently addressed to further enhance the learning environment provided at NMMU. These enabling factors and challenges will be outlined briefly below.

Among the key **enabling factors** are:

- a. A generally supportive and enabling learning environment (see Table 10).
- b. The ability and in-house expertise to design ICT and AV solutions that advances the use of technology in learning.

**Key challenges** that need to be urgently addressed and some suggestions how they could be addressed are provided in Table 13.

**Table 13: Learning Environment Enhancement Challenges to Address**

Challenge	Suggestions
<b>Teaching and Learning-related spaces</b>	<b>Lecture venues:</b> Need a refurbishment plan to reconfigure existing and especially under-utilised spaces, and to create a better alignment between lecture venues and the NMMU T&L <i>blend</i> of active and collaborative learning together with greater use of educational technology in facilitating learning
	<b>Small venues:</b> Need more small venues for group work and for training purposes
	<b>Large venues:</b> Need more 100 to 200-seater venues
	<b>Mindset change:</b> Need to conceptualise that teaching and learning can take place 24/7 in and out of class (which includes online learning). This could reduce some of the need to teach everything face-to-face, which could lessen some of the demand for lecture venues.
	<b>Learning spaces:</b> Need to identify/create more open learning spaces, possibly linked to departments/faculties
	<b>Study spaces:</b> Need to create more 24/7 study spaces both on and off campus
	<b>Resting spaces:</b> Need to create resting spaces for students with disabilities

Challenge	Suggestions
<b>Technology in teaching, learning and assessment</b>	Increase the uptake of blended learning by lecturers and students (Table 3 contains suggestions in this regard)
	Develop an e-assessment strategy and good practice guidelines
	Identify suitable venue(s) for e-assessment to be performed
	Increase access to mobile technology and off campus connectivity for students and develop more “charging stations” (that are eco-friendly).
<b>Timetabling</b>	Need an integrated timetable that includes small group activities (SI, tuts, etc.) as well as movement of students between campuses
	Create an automated system to allocate students into pre-defined class groups in terms of qualification/programme and module choices to improve the flagging and management of facility overcrowding

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

### 5.1 Aspects of NMMU’s Strategic Plan that relate to this focus area

An extract from NMMU’s Vision 2020 Strategic Framework related to student success is provided in sub-section 1.1.2. In addition and probably of more pertinence to focus area 4, is Vision 2020 Strategic priority 1 - *Formulate and implement an integrated strategic academic plan and distinctive knowledge paradigm*, together with Strategic goal 1 - *Determine the academic size and shape of NMMU in a manner that optimises our strategic niche as a comprehensive university and responds to regional, national and global development needs* (which includes enrolment management) and Strategic goal 2 - *Design and implement a range of access routes as well as progression and articulation strategies and pathways between qualification types to enhance student access and progression*.

The following NMMU policies and implementation procedures also pertain to course and programme enrolment:

- a. *Admissions Policy*
- b. *Procedures for Implementing NMMU’s Admission Policy for Undergraduate Programmes* (which also contains the admission of applicants with foreign /international qualifications in an appendix)
- c. *Master’s and Doctoral Degrees Policy*
- d. *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*
- e. *Readmission to Undergraduate Programmes Policy*,
- f. *Teaching and Learning Policy*
- g. *Recess Programmes Policy*
- h. Each faculty annually publishes a *Prospectus* with information about the programmes offered, which includes admission requirements and modules which students must enrol for, readmission rules, and so on.

## 5.2 Activities currently in place related to this focus area that are successful and evidence to substantiate that they are successful

**Table 14: Enhancing Course and Programme Enrolment: Successes**

Theme	Activity	Evidence
Enrolment planning and capping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data-informed, iterative process whereby MIS provides projections, which faculties nuance/modify. Takes place in 3- to 4-year cycles depending on the DHET requirements</li> <li>Annually decisions are made about capping new intakes into programmes for the following year. MIS provides information on enrolment trends per programme. Once faculties have determined which programmes will be capped and what the cap will be, MIS makes projections regarding the number of places that need to be offered to reach the cap.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrolment plan approved by the DHET</li> <li>Capping of student intake into programmes approved by ECS and Senate</li> </ul>
Marketing and new student recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open Days are held in Port Elizabeth and George annually.</li> <li>Career expos</li> <li>A range of informative marketing guides and brochures are distributed and there are marketing campaigns in newspapers and on radio.</li> <li>An informative NMMU website provides information plus access to the UG and PG programme guides, admission criteria, etc.</li> <li>Closing dates are widely advertised – NMMU does not accommodate walk-ins in January, which has meant that closing dates need to be aggressively marketed.</li> <li>Visits to schools and colleges, largely on invitation, to share information about programmes and admissions requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance of marketing events</li> <li>Number of marketing materials distributed</li> <li>Feedback from prospective students, schools and parents</li> <li>No. of VC Scholarship application forms distributed</li> <li>No. of hits on the admissions page of the NMMU website.</li> </ul>
Career advising and counselling, programme advising, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short learning programme (SLP) related to career guidance offered by SCCDC to Life Orientation teachers</li> <li>Career counselling offered by SCCDC to prospective students</li> <li>Winter schools/career evenings related to specific careers or fields of study (e.g., Accounting, Science)</li> <li>Programme advice provided by Admissions, faculty administration, HoDs and DoSs, etc.</li> <li>Generic first year in diplomas in the School of Management Sciences after which students choose a career focus to pursue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of Life Orientation teachers attending SLP</li> <li>No. of group and individual career counselling sessions and feedback</li> <li>Attendance at winter schools/career evenings and feedback</li> <li>Feedback regarding generic first-year from students</li> </ul>
Undergraduate admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research-based admissions criteria</li> <li><b>Centralised</b> admissions decision-making</li> <li><b>Two-tier approach:</b> applicants that meet the direct admissions requirements are accepted. An applicant who does not meet the direct requirements but whose APS falls in a certain range is referred to CAAR for developmentally focused access assessment. CAAR consultants make the admission decision based on school and test results and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. of applications received</li> <li>No. of VC Scholarship applications received</li> <li>Turn-around time for applications to be processed</li> <li>No. students admitted and</li> </ul>

Theme	Activity	Evidence
	<p>advise on other placement/programme options, where necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Developmental recommendations:</b> For those assessed for admission, CAAR provides developmental recommendations to departments and faculties. Applicants receive reports containing the developmental recommendations and are guided regarding how to address them. Students are encouraged to make use of available resources and also directed to the Keys to Success website. The developmental recommendations are sometimes used when redesigning curricula and for teaching development. Academics are also referred to the Student Success website which provides examples how they can address the recommendations in class.</li> </ul>	<p>registered after CAAR testing (<i>around 50% of the new intake each year is admitted via CAAR testing</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success of students admitted after CAAR testing (Of the students that graduated in 2012 and 2013, <b>4109</b> were admitted via the access assessment route).</li> <li>• Number and nature of developmental recommendations for each new intake</li> <li>• Reports to faculties re. dev. recommendations</li> </ul>
Postgraduate admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Decentralised</b> to faculties and departments</li> <li>• Procedures guided by the Master's and Doctoral Degrees policy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. of applications received</li> <li>• Turn-around time for processing applications</li> </ul>
Re-admission to undergraduate programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Re-admission Policy makes provision for the performance of all students to be tracked so that those who experience challenges can be identified early and be assisted or referred to, for example, SCCDC for counselling and assessment. They could also be advised to change programmes. As a result, many departments have processes in place to monitor student progress and to engage with students that are identified as experiencing difficulties. However, the student tracking and monitoring process needs to be more systematic and uniform across the institution to ensure that students with difficulties are identified early and put in touch with services and resources that can assist them.</li> <li>• Re-admission rules are in place for each programme and are reasonably stringently applied. Students receive a warning when they are identified as running the risk of not being readmitted and attempts are made to advise/counsel them. Such students could be conditionally readmitted after the warning, with clear information on what conditions they must meet to be readmitted at the end of a semester/ academic year.</li> <li>• Students have the right to appeal when they are refused re-admission</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-admission rules published</li> <li>• No. of students warned.</li> <li>• No. of students referred to SCCDC</li> <li>• No. of students that are seen at SCCDC</li> <li>• No. students refused re-admission</li> </ul>
Throughput rates especially in gateway modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In many departments and faculties statistics regarding throughput and success rates are presented and discussed during meetings and strategic planning sessions.</li> <li>• In some departments, Summer and Winter Schools are held which allow students who have failed a module to repeat it immediately instead of waiting for the module to be presented in the subsequent academic year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Winter and Summer School enrolment numbers</li> <li>• Winter and Summer School success rates</li> <li>• Throughput rates in modules with Summer/ Winter Schools</li> </ul>



Theme	Activity	Evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Additional lecture time and/or tutorial time is provided in some high risk modules</li> <li>Feedback from external examiners and moderators is used to redesign aspects of high risk modules the next time they are presented.</li> <li>Attention is given to teaching methods and assessment modes in high risk modules</li> <li>In some programmes (e.g., Accounting) there are articulation pathways and through the monitoring process students who are struggling are identified and they may be advised to consider an articulation opportunity when deemed necessary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No. students that change programmes and their success rates.</li> <li>No. of students that articulate into related programmes and their subsequent success rates</li> </ul>
Management Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MIS has developed Intelliweb which is an advanced web-based self-help system developed for faculty and administrative staff to access pre-designed reports designed according to their specific needs.</li> <li>MIS also run numerous data queries and undertake data modelling and cohort analyses on request</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from academics about the usefulness of the reports available on Intelliweb</li> </ul>

### 5.3 Activities related to this focus area initiated during the past three or four years that have been less successful than hoped for

Generally there is evidence to substantiate that the activities highlighted per theme in Table 14 are having a positive impact on student success and development. However, students and academics note that their impact could be even more significant if the following could be addressed:

**Table 15: Less Successful Aspects of Enhancing Course and Programme Enrolment**

Activities	Reasons
Identifying students that struggle at a modular level before formal examinations	This has been less successful. The main reasons for this is that test and assignment marks have not routinely been captured on ITS and the options that ITS offers in this regard do not meet the needs of all the lecturers in terms of the number of marks that need capturing. Capturing of class marks on ITS must be enforced and solutions must be found for those departments where such capturing poses a challenge.
	Without having all the test marks on ITS, some academics have used manual mark sheets to identify students, but the labour intensive exercise for particularly large class groups has resulted in manual oversights or non-implementation and students are sometimes not notified that they have not met the DP (duly performed) requirement to sit for an exam in a module.
	No formal electronic system to assist academic staff in programmatically identifying students that are struggling at modular a level
Career guidance and streaming	Lack of career guidance in schools means that many first-time entering students are doubly disadvantaged – in terms of HE preparedness and in terms of choosing a course of study that is aligned with their interests, aptitude, etc. It takes some students a while to find that they are in the wrong programme and by the time that they have received career counselling it might already be so late in the year that they cannot switch to another programme until the subsequent year. This can be very demotivating and some students might dropout as a result.

Activities	Reasons
	As applicants are desperate to study at university and given that the numbers of many programmes are capped, which means that many applicants cannot be admitted to their first choice programme, students often become demotivated as what they end up studying is not aligned with their interests and aspirations. A similar situation arises when through the CAAR access testing process applicants are streamed from a degree to a diploma programme or from diploma to a higher certificate programme that is still in the same career field but is not the student's first choice.
Re-admission	Some re-admission rules need to be refined as there are some that exclude students after the first semester of the first year, which is a period when students are still gradually adjusting to the demands of university life. Currently, the identification of students who will be refused re-admission takes place before re-examinations, which is problematic, and some adjustment of the process is needed

#### 5.4 Activities recently implemented or planned to implement in the next 12 to 18 months

**Table 16: Recently Implemented and Planned activities to enhance course and programme enrolment**

Activity	Description
Student Tracking and Early Detection System	Various academic departments together with ICT Services are piloting aspects of an electronic system to track student progress and identify those who are struggling and in need of assistance at an early stage. These pilots will be consolidated into one system in time to come.
Automation of the identification of students who do not meet the requirements for re-admission	NMMU has embarked on an investigation to develop an automated system that would provide the facility to capture the annual re-admission rules, evaluate student progress against those rules and identify the various levels of exclusions programmatically by allocating an appropriate annual result to each student. This development would not only improve efficiencies in the process, but also the accuracy of identification and the speed of feedback to students.
Streaming students between extended (4 year) and regular three-year programmes	The Faculty of Science is piloting the possibility of streaming mainstream students who are identified as struggling during the first semester to an augmented extended programme, which could become a prototype for a 4-year BSc programme
Online registration	While academics view the introduction of online registration as progressive and commendable, there were a number of hiccups this year that need to be addressed. The hiccups are mainly around module choices and programme rules that were not appropriately built in or which students did not fully understand.
Academic size and shape models	The Institutional Planning division has instituted a process to develop a range of models linked to academic size and shape. An Affordability Model is being developed to give a snapshot view of the key variables that impact on the financial viability of the academic project. Furthermore, an Academic Planning Model is being developed to diagnostically assess the strategic and academic viability of the size and shape of programmes. These two models will assist in programme planning, reshaping and rationalising as well as enrolment planning.

## **5.5 Challenges or problems related to this focus area that still need to be addressed**

### **5.5.1 Challenges and constraints**

A number of challenges related to this focus area have already been raised in sub-sections 5.2 to 5.4. In addition to these, further challenges are:

- The admissions process for students with disabilities requires fine-tuning to ensure that the necessary guidance can be provided regarding programme options and that sufficient support and assistive technologies are available to create a conducive learning environment for such students,
- The relatively lengthy period to change admission requirements and implement them is problematic, but difficult to overcome given that the intake for the next academic year starts in earnest in June.
- Inconsistency in late registration processes and dates for undergraduate programmes and registration and late registration of Master's and Doctoral students.
- Requirements/Processes of the International Office are sometimes not in line with those used for local/South African students. This creates difficulties for the academic department and the student at times.
- Improved communication and alignment of functions is needed between university administration structures and academic departments to create more seamless, integrated business processes.
- Research is needed into the effectiveness of articulation and streaming options in terms of enhancing student success.
- Elective and service modules – students are not always motivated to put in a lot of effort in elective and service modules, which impacts on success and throughput rates. In addition, programme coordinators sometimes find it difficult to intervene if students in their programme are struggling with a service module as the module does not resort in their department and often not even in their faculty.

### **5.5.2 Overview Reflection of Enhancing Course and Programme Enrolment**

There are a number of key enabling factors that have emerged that should be leveraged as well as a number of challenges that need to be urgently addressed to further enhance the course and programme enrolment at NMMU. These enabling factors and challenges will be outlined briefly below.

Key enabling factors are:

- a. Data-driven and research-informed enrolment planning.
- b. Centralised undergraduate admissions process with the option of developmentally focused access testing for those who do not meet the direct entry admissions requirements.
- c. Clear, best practice procedures for postgraduate admission.
- d. Readmission procedures that are clearly articulated and communicated to students.
- e. Availability of statistics related to throughput and success rates and activities to address low throughput and success rates in gateway and high risk modules.

**Key challenges** that need to be urgently addressed and some suggestions how they could be addressed are provided in Table 17.

**Table 17: Enhancing Course and Programme Enrolment: Challenges to Address**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
Career guidance	Intensify efforts to capacitate Life Orientation teachers to be able to offer career advice. The SLP that SCCDC offers in this regard is ideal, but offering it impacts on their already stretched staff capacity.
	Develop a strategy to assist more first-time entering students to get career counselling early in their first semester. This has resource implications, some of which can be addressed by using psychology students who need to gain practical experience in career counselling. Online options should also be explored.
Student Tracking and Early Detection System	Fast-track the development of an electronic system to track student progress and detect at an early stage that a student needs assistance.
	In a parallel process, the availability of student advisors in faculties (but with a strong link to HEADS) who could follow up and have one-on-one sessions with students identified as being in need of development and support, would increase the likelihood that early detection could be matched with appropriate support and interventions. The appointment of student advisors has resource implications, as only one faculty and a few departments have student advisors at present.
Re-admission	Fast-track the automation of the identification of students who do not meet the requirements for re-admission
	Adjust rules so as not to exclude first year students and refine the process so that it is aligned better with re-examinations
Success and throughput rates and service modules	Develop a set of throughput strategies that have a track record of enhancing success and throughout rates which academics could use as a resource
	Research the impact of strategies to enhance success and throughput rates
	Develop a protocol related to service modules and strategies to encourage students to change their mind-set towards service modules.

## 6. OTHER AREAS THAT AFFECT STUDENT SUCCESS

Other challenges related to student success and activities that we are undertaking in relation to them will be presented in Table 18.

**Table 18: Other Challenges Related to Student Success**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Lack of funding for students	The problems with changes to NSFAS funding this year had an impact on our student retention rate (as some returning students had to stop-out/dropout as they had insufficient funds to study this year). Others had to register late and missed some class time as a result, which could impact negatively on their success. NMMU has proactively engaged with NSFAS to ensure that there is not a repeat of what happened this year at the start of next year. In addition, students are receiving clear information about the requirements for qualifying for NSFAS funding.

Challenge	Activity
Lack of on campus accommodation	Less than 10% of our students are accommodated on our campuses. Given the supportive learning environment that a campus provides, our Vision 2020 goal was to have between 15 and 20% of our students accommodated on our campus. The cost of building new accommodation is making it very difficult for us to reach this target.
Nutrition of students	<p>Many students are hungry, which impacts on their concentration and sense of well-being. Our Campus Health division has a feeding scheme in place and our Agriculture students have developed a vegetable garden for applied learning purposes and they donate all the vegetables they grow to Campus Health.</p> <p>Students complain that there are mainly fast-food outlets on campus and that they cannot buy sufficiently healthy foods. Catering Services are looking into this.</p>
Transport	Many students live far from campus and transport is costly, which means that they choose which days to attend class and which not to. This can have a negative impact on their success. There have been discussions with the Metro (municipality) to see how they can assist, but nothing concrete has emerged from this yet. Inter-campus transport has improved, but it is still not as regular as students would like it, especially if they have a short period to move between campuses to get to their next lecture.

## 7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

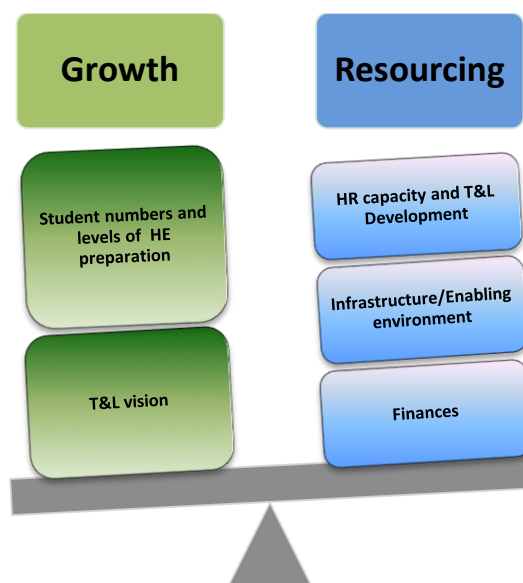
Reflecting across the four focus areas related to enhancing student success and the themes that emerged, some overarching reflections are:

- a. NMMU has a holistic approach to student success which is aligned to our vision of educating students for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to the student lifecycle.
- b. NMMU has a number of key, high impact activities and initiatives in place, both in and outside the classroom, to enhance student success holistically and to enhance the development of teaching and learning facilitation.
- c. NMMU has key elements in place to provide a conducive learning environment that fosters student success

Notwithstanding the enabling factors mentioned above, the key challenge that NMMU faces if it is to continue the current positive trajectory of enhancing student success and throughput rates and the quality of the learning experience provided to students, is to manage the balance between growth and resourcing. Constant increases in student numbers and the implementation of new programmes together with the T&L development and infrastructure needs associated with implementing NMMU's T&L vision have stretched our resources to a point where there is little "stretch capacity" left. Without serious attention being given to additional resourcing in terms of HR capacity and T&L development, and infrastructure enhancement, which require the allocation of financial

resources, NMMU's ability to continue to deliver on its vision of creating a responsive, enabling learning environment conducive to fostering holistic student success is at risk. As depicted in Figure 4, we need to achieve a better balance between growth and resourcing. Implementing some of the recommendations made in the various focus areas covered in this report will assist in restoring the balance. In addition, a project is in progress to develop academic planning and affordability models that can assist with programme and enrolment planning. The first phase of developing the models has been completed and they are currently being refined. The application of these models will greatly assist us to more effectively manage the balance between growth and resourcing.

**Figure 4: Getting the Balance Back**



## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS USED

AD	Academic development
AP	Academic Planning
BtC	Beyond the Classroom (programme)
CAAR	Centre for Access Assessment and Research
CAEC	Centre for Academic Engagement and Collaboration
CANRAD	Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy
CCR	Co-Curricular Record
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CTLM	Centre for Teaching, Learning and Media
DALS	Department of Applied Language Studies
Dept.	Department
Dev.	Development
DoSs	Directors of Schools
e-PAL	Electronic Peer-assisted Learning
HEADS	Higher Education, Access and Development Services
HC's/HK's	House committee members (in residences)
HoDs	Heads of Departments
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LEC	Learning Enhancement Checklist
LIS	Library and Information Services
LMS	Learning Management System
LSSE	Lecturer Survey of Student Engagement
MANCO	Management Committee of NMMU
MIS	Management Information Services
MV	Missionvale
NMMU TLC	NMMU Teaching and Learning Committee
PG	Postgraduate
PGCHE	Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education
Prof. Assoc.	Professional Associations
Prog.	Programme
QA	Quality Advancement
SASSE	South African Survey of Student Engagement
SCCDC	Student Counselling, Career and Development Centre
SI	Supplemental Instruction
SL	Service learning
SoTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
SoTLC	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Certificate

SP	Strategic Planning
SRC	Student Representatives' Council
T&L	Teaching and Learning
T, R & E	Teaching, Research and Engagement
UG	Undergraduate
WIL	Work Integrated Learning