



HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COMMITTEE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Audit Report
on
Monash South Africa**

Report of the HEQC to Monash South Africa

September 2007

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Acronyms

ADP	Academic Development Programme
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
AP	Audit Portfolio
CALT	Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching
CE	Community Engagement
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHEQ	Centre for Higher Education Quality
CHESP	Community-Higher Education Service Partnerships
DoE	Department of Education
GCHE	Graduate Certificate in Higher Education
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
IT	Information Technology
ITS	Division of Information Technology Services
JET	Joint Education Trust
LIASA	Library Information Association of South Africa
MEQ	Monash Experience Questionnaire
MoC	Memorandum of Cooperation
MonQuest	Monash Questionnaire Series on Teaching
MQN	Monash Quality Network
MRGS	Monash Research Graduate School
MSA	Monash South Africa
MUSASA	Monash University Student Association South Africa
MUSO	Monash University Studies Online
PVC	Pro Vice Chancellor
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SACat	South Africa National Cataloguing Database
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SM	Supplementary Material
SMC	Senior Management Committee
SMs	Supplementary Materials

Overview of the Audit

Introduction

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council of Higher Education (CHE) has statutory responsibility to conduct institutional audits as indicated in the Higher Education Act of 1997. This responsibility of the HEQC is also recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in the accreditation of the CHE as the Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) for the higher education band.

The Audit of Monash South Africa, (hereinafter referred to as MSA), was conducted by the HEQC in terms of its mandate. The HEQC has entered into a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). The audit of MSA took place within this cooperation agreement. AUQA scheduled its audit of Monash University to take place in 2006. The AUQA audit process requires that the Audit Panel visit off-shore campuses, of which MSA is one such campus. The two quality agencies and Monash University agreed that the audit visit to MSA would be undertaken jointly. For AUQA this would constitute a visit to MSA as one of several visits it made to Monash campuses and for the HEQC it would be a comprehensive audit of MSA. This document reports on the audit process and findings based on the Audit Portfolio and documentary appendices provided by MSA, supplementary documentation requested from the institution, and interviews and observations made during the audit visit that took place between 29 August and 1 September 2006.

This report¹ provides an overview of the audit visit, the findings of the Panel in relation to the audit criteria set by the HEQC and a list of the commendations and recommendations made by the HEQC.

The Audit Process

In April 2005 the Executive Director of the HEQC secured the consent of Monash University and AUQA that the HEQC audit visit of MSA would take place between 29 August and 1 September 2006 and would run parallel to the audit of Monash University by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). Monash produced an Audit Portfolio for review by the Audit Panel. The Monash University Portfolio for the AUQA and the HEQC audits comprised three volumes, namely, Volume 1 (Monash University), Volume 2 (Monash Malaysia) and Volume 3 (Monash South Africa), together with Supplementary Materials (SM). Volume 3 was to be read in conjunction with Volume 1, in which institutional systems in place across Monash University and its operations on four continents are outlined. The Monash Portfolio together with supporting documentation was submitted to the HEQC in June 2006.

¹ The report includes four appendices: Appendix A lists the objectives of HEQC Audits; Appendix B provides the names of the members of the Audit Panel, Appendix C lists the documents submitted by Monash South Africa and Appendix D contains the audit visit schedule.

The HEQC and AUQA constituted a joint panel for the site visit of MSA (see Appendix B). Although the Panel worked jointly, the AUQA Panel members focused mainly on the AUQA quality audit requirements whilst the HEQC members of the Panel focused on the HEQC requirements. The HEQC selected Audit Panel members who were senior academics from higher education institutions in South Africa, while AUQA nominated Australian Panel members. An audit portfolio meeting for the South African members of the Panel was held on 6 June 2006 in Pretoria at which details of the audit site visit were discussed.

On 9 June 2006 a telephone conference was held with the South African and Australian Panel members. The format, programme for the visit, and other details of the audit were discussed and agreed upon.

The audit visit took place from 29 August 2006 to 1 September 2006. During the visit, the Panel members toured the campus and interviewed staff and students about various aspects of their experiences at MSA.

In all, the Audit Panel interviewed more than 150 people during the audit visit, including

- the Vice Chancellor of Monash University
- the Pro Vice Chancellor (MSA) and members of senior management
- academic and administrative/general staff
- undergraduate and postgraduate students, including representatives of the student unions
- external partners, employers and members of the local community
- Alumni.

An open session was also available for any staff member or student of the institution and of its wider community to make a quality-related submission to the audit Panel. No members of the institution chose to make use of the open session.

This report reflects the audit process and findings based on the Audit Portfolio provided by MSA, supplementary documentation requested from the institution, and interviews and observations made during the audit visit. Every effort has been made to understand the quality related arrangements at the institution at the time of the audit visit and to base the Panel's conclusions on the documentation submitted, the interviews held and the observations made.

It is expected that MSA will use these findings to strengthen its internal quality management systems and thereby facilitate the improvement of the quality of its core academic activities. Decisions about the manner in which this is done, and the priority accorded to the various recommendations, is the prerogative of MSA. It is expected that five months after the publication of the Audit Report, MSA will submit to the HEQC an improvement plan based on the HEQC Audit Report.

The HEQC would like to thank MSA for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the audit process. The HEQC also wishes to express appreciation for the openness and confidence shown by MSA's management in allowing the Audit Panel to conduct its work. Efficient preparation by MSA resulted in a trouble-free audit that allowed the auditors to focus their attention on the main purposes of the audit. The hospitality and assistance of MSA's personnel was appreciated. Professor Graham Webb, Ms Nicolene Murdoch and their team in particular are thanked for the preparation of the documentation, as well as for their co-operation and helpfulness throughout the process.

Summary of Findings

Introduction

This section summarises the main conclusions which emerged from the audit.

The commendations of the HEQC signal areas of strength, excellence and/or innovation but which may require ongoing institutional support. The recommendations of the HEQC signal issues that may require new or strengthened attention with regard to quality provision. The HEQC notes that MSA has itself identified many of these issues for attention. These and a number of other issues will need to be incorporated into the overall quality assurance planning and practice at MSA, with appropriate allocation of responsibility for implementation and monitoring.

Monash South Africa (MSA) is a residential institution situated on a 100 hectare site in Ruimsig, 25km north-west of Johannesburg city centre. It is a not-for-profit private higher education provider, wholly owned by Monash University, a public university established in the State of Victoria, Australia, by an Act of Parliament in 1958. MSA is registered as a private higher education provider with the South African Department of Education under the Higher Education Act of 1997 (certificate no. 00HF02) and incorporated under Section 21 of the 1973 Companies Act (reg. no. 1999/032985/08).

MSA is organised into three Schools, Arts, Business and Economics, and Information Technology. It offers four undergraduate degrees in these areas. A coursework Masters of Commerce in Business Systems and a postgraduate Diploma in Professional Accounting have received full accreditation from the HEQC, but are not yet offered. An Academic Development Programme is offered as an entry pathway.

In 2006, MSA had a headcount of 1164 students (including students in the Academic Development Programme), 154 of whom were South African. In December 2005 MSA employed 159 staff, 67 academic (full-time and part-time), and 76 administrative, support and general staff. Of the academic staff, 86% were South African, 84% of whom were white.

MSA is a recently established institution which as part of the Monash University network is committed to quality in the three core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. There is well developed academic leadership and qualified and experienced teaching staff, appropriate academic support and a rigorous system to ensure the quality of provision. Given the nature of the institution, its stated objectives and commitments, the Panel flagged three general areas in need of attention:

1. Finalisation of the development and implementation of some of its quality cycle processes.
2. Review of its recruitment and retention plans to focus more clearly and decisively on expanding the recruitment and retention of South African-born African students.

3. Development, through debate, of a common institutional understanding of what it means to be 'research intensive', which could enhance participation at all levels in the institution and enhance the institution's research profile. MSA also needs to identify its 'community' so that community engagement is integrated into teaching, learning and research.

List of Commendations and Recommendations

A list of commendations and recommendations follows. These are not presented in order of priority. They are clustered below to provide a quick overview for the reader. The body of the report also draws attention to other issues for attention and consideration by MSA.

Commendations

1. The HEQC commends MSA for its efforts in implementing a range of surveys to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement.
2. The HEQC commends MSA for introducing the Tutor-Mentor Programme for students in the Academic Development Programme with the aim of fostering the development of a greater measure of self-responsibility and of enhancing cultural and gender tolerance.
3. The HEQC commends MSA for the quality of its library holdings and for providing efficient and sufficient library services to its staff and students.
4. The HEQC commends MSA for the high levels of IT provision and services, and equipment to support teaching and learning in teaching venues at MSA.

Recommendations

1. The HEQC recommends that MSA review its recruitment and retention plans to focus more clearly and decisively on expanding the recruitment and retention of South African-born African students.
2. The HEQC recommends that MSA continue to pursue its commitment to greater equity in its staff profile.
3. The HEQC recommends that MSA ensures that the Monash Quality Cycle is fully and effectively implemented in Schools and academic support units to ensure quality provision.

4. The HEQC recommends that MSA finalise its development of the consolidation of the findings of evaluations and surveys, and implement measures for ensuring that improvement initiatives are acted upon.
5. The HEQC recommends that MSA put measures in place for ensuring that the programme design and review process allows for contextualisation of the curriculum and for the use of South African textbooks and for ensuring that these measures are implemented effectively in all the Schools.
6. The HEQC recommends that MSA implement the policy for regular course reviews and that mechanisms be put in place to ensure that identified improvements are acted upon.
7. The HEQC recommends that MSA put measures in place to ensure the effective implementation of the performance management system.
8. The HEQC recommends that, through debate, MSA facilitate a common understanding of the notion of 'research intensive' so that academics, support staff and students can contribute to the planned growth activities and thereby enhance the institution's research profile.
9. The HEQC recommends that MSA reconceptualise the notion of its community and, in the light of this, develop and implement a community engagement policy which integrates community engagement into the curriculum, and ensure that monitoring and review mechanisms are incorporated into the policy.