# MAKING AN IMPACT ON QUALITY

## Annual Teaching and Learning Report

## 2015



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CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING (CTL)
ONDERRIG-EN-LEERSENTRUM (OLS)

## MISSION:

Scholarship-driven advancement and leadership of innovation and excellence in teaching and learning.

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# Vice-Rector: Academic's Message

Dr Lis Lange

Nothing is more difficult in the terrain of social sciences than to measure impact, yet it is difficult to read this 2015 report of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) without thinking that something is changing in teaching and learning at the UFS.

It has taken only three years since its creation in 2012 for CTL to become a multifaceted unit reaching out to most aspects of teaching and learning. From tutorials for students to academic staff development; from assessment to curricular design; from a common first-year module to student data analytics, the work of the CTL has three fundamental features. *Theoretical rigour:* whether it is student engagement, assessment or the use of technology in the classroom, CTL designs its programmes based on solid academic ground which is permanently scouted around the world. *Evidence-based:* all CTL programmes are inspired by evidence of success in similar contexts or on an analysis of institutional data. All CTL programmes systematically collect and analyse data about what they do and how they do it. *Commitment to quality results:* all CTL staff as well as all the staff who participate in CTL programmes are united by the same passion for good quality teaching and learning and the conviction that all our students have a right to it.

Operating across three campuses CTL work is helping not only to move the needle of student success, which they are doing, but also to improve the quality and depth of staff engagement with teaching and learning. The work taking place on the Qwaqwa Campus is creating communities of practice that are also changing the institutional culture on that campus. The South Campus, in its new configuration, continues to be a laboratory for ever more sophisticated and successful approaches to student access and success.

Most of the programmes of the CTL are funded through the Department of Higher Education and Training Teaching Development Grant, but the CTL has also secured external funding based on its reputation for its work on student engagement and on ensuring student success.

This second annual report has an interesting twist in that it brings the voices of the actors both inside the CTL itself and in the faculties in a distinctive way. A careful reader will realise the important role that teaching and learning managers located in the faculties play in changing the culture of teaching and learning at faculty level. Changing culture is the most difficult task required by institutional transformation. Top-down change is bound to failure; that is the reason why active and committed agents of change in the faculties are so important and necessary. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the teaching and learning managers in the faculties for their dedication, their commitment to serious scholarship in teaching and learning and their enthusiasm and good humour under, often, very trying circumstances. Successful teaching and learning managers usually need the commitment and direct support of deans who demonstrate their own commitment to good quality teaching and learning by showing leadership in introducing change. This report clearly shows what happens when deans exercise their leadership. My thanks go also to them for a good year in improving what we do.

The staff at CTL could not be harder working or more committed to the notion that good quality teaching and learning is part of the social justice agenda of this University. Few universities in South Africa have a centre for teaching and learning covering the range of programmes that the CTL has while producing at the same time considerable research outputs.

When the CTL was created three years ago, it had to struggle to find its place at the UFS. A main concern was the extent to which its activities were going to be sufficiently institutionalised and to what extent it would manage to develop a productive relationship with

academics, who are, after all, the real owners of what happens in the lecture halls and in the curriculum. This report suggests that the CTL has found a balance in its interactions with the faculties and that via the teacher and learning managers this relationship is developing in a productive way.

This year the Senate of the UFS approved the creation of a Teaching and Learning Committee that will start working in 2016. This committee, in which several CTL members will participate ex-officio, will insert the CTL's work more structurally into the institutional conversation about teaching and learning, and will also make teaching and learning more obviously a responsibility of the Senate of the University.

2015 has been a difficult year in higher education. It has brought to the surface a number of unresolved issues not only in relation to access and fees, but also about pedagogy and curriculum. As difficult as it has been to process, to understand and to manage the student protest, this has been an extraordinarily productive year in the sense that every crisis brings with itself the opportunity of better and deeper thinking and of finding more appropriate courses of action to solve the problems before us. Of course, as in all crises, a variety of factors interact with each other and it is difficult to predict what kind of resolution will emerge in the medium and long term. For the time being, it seems clear that we need to work in a more focused way to understand students' concerns in the areas of curriculum and pedagogy at this University and to find appropriate ways of responding to this. In this task, the CTL as well as all academics and staff committed to change in the faculties, are essential actors.

From the points of view of the operationalisation of the objectives of the academic portfolio plan and of bringing the UFS closer to achieving its strategic objectives, I would like to thank Prof Francois Strydom and his colleagues for a job well done. ■

# Directors' Message

Prof Francois Strydom and Mr Francois Marais

*The trouble with organizing a thing is that pretty soon folks get to paying more attention to the organization than to what they're organizing.*

*—Laura Ingalls Wilder*

This quotation reminds us of the importance of reflecting on progress and why we organise activities and deploy UFS resources at institutional, faculty, departmental, and individual level to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the UFS. This annual report displays the quality of work that is possible through the collaboration and hard work of dedicated and committed staff in faculties and the CTL. This report is focused on showing how the quality of teaching and learning has improved at the UFS in the context of the UFS Teaching and Learning Strategy (TLS) that was approved in May 2014. Therefore, the report is structured using the seven improvement objectives of the strategy, as well as graduate attributes. Although we have tried to group articles with specific strategic objectives it will be clear to the reader that many of the initiatives can be linked to several of the TLS improvement strategies.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank all the contributors for their hard work. The aim of this report is to recognise their work and share their innovative ideas and practices. This aligns the UFS with global perspectives and teaching that optimises student learning and success. ■

# Executive Summary

Prof Francois Strydom and Annél Oosthuysen

## How do we know if we are making an impact on quality?

This was one of the questions raised by a member of Senate when the Teaching and Learning Strategy (TLS) was proposed in May 2014. Kuh et al. (2015) state that assessing the impact of institutional improvement in higher education is notoriously challenging. Assessment needs to be focused on a specific question, which would therefore improve the quality of teaching and learning in this instance, and produce multiple data sources. These authors also warn that evidence collected for assessment purposes does not "speak for itself". Thus, this annual report aims to provide evidence from different data sources and to interpret and reflect on the implications in a more holistic way.

The TLS is focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning which as higher education experts indicate, is one of the distinguishing features of international elite research institutions (Altbach & Salmi, 2011). The TLS comprises seven improvement objectives to promote quality teaching and learning and student success in the 21st century. These objectives are:

- Raising awareness of quality teaching and learning;
- Developing excellent teachers;
- Engaging students for success;
- Building an organisation for change and teaching and learning leadership;
- Aligning institutional policies to foster quality teaching and learning;
- Highlighting innovation as a driver for change;
- Evidence-based change through assessment; and
- Developing graduate attributes.

To answer the initial question of how we know if we are making an impact on quality; this report will present case studies of progress within each of the seven improvement objectives in the TLS.

## Raising awareness of quality teaching and learning

The first step to raising the awareness of the importance of quality teaching and learning was the development and adoption of the TLS by senate. This was followed by a range of strategies which included publishing an Annual Teaching and Learning Report at the end of 2014. The Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards were marketed more effectively and the UFS had nine staff enter the CHE/HELTASA National Teaching and Learning Awards. With the opportunity to host the HELTASA 2014 conference, the CTL invited five international speakers whose valuable messages were shared with at least 100 staff. In addition, the Annual Teaching and Learning Report reached approximately 350 HELTASA delegates from across the country.

In this report, the case study on "Raising awareness and promoting quality in faculties" (p.9) provides important insights into the approaches that two faculties have already developed to promote quality teaching and learning. Secondly, the use of the Classroom Survey of Student Engagement (CLASSE) illustrates how data-driven student and staff perspectives can be used in an innovative and constructive way to improve the quality of teaching and learning (p.12), and finally the focus turns to the teaching awards and their role in awareness (p.15).

## Developing excellent teachers

Academics are confronted with highly complex challenges in today's classroom, ranging from students with varying levels of preparedness to the "disruptive" impact of new technologies. Therefore, the development of new academic staff development opportunities and support mechanisms are vital in helping to improve quality. This year, the focus was on redesigning staff development initiatives based on focus group research from 2012 and 2013 as well as feedback from 2014 participants (p.18). In addition, the Difficult Dialogues project (p.22) emphasises the importance of facilitating critical self-reflection amongst staff in order to empower them

to develop this skill in their students. Moreover, the case study on staff orientation in Health Science (p.25) illustrates the importance of orientation in furthering staff comprehension of the roles they perform and efficiency therein. Therefore, this shows the extent to which CTL works towards developing an ethic of excellent teaching practices at the UFS.

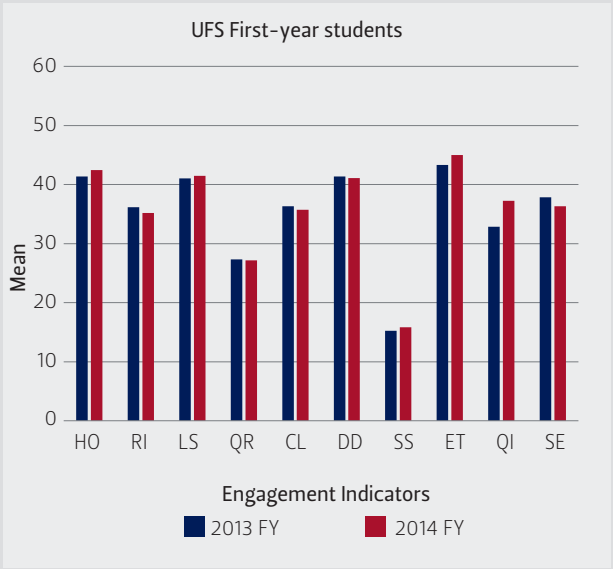
## Engaging students for success

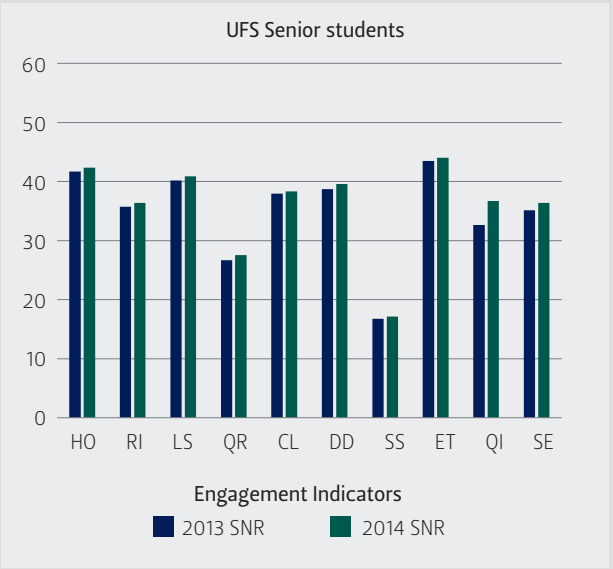
Engaging students in their learning not only improves the quality of the learning process, but also enhances students' chances of success. The CTL plays a leading role in promoting evidence-based change in higher education, especially in the area of teaching and learning through using student engagement data. Figures 1 & 2 below provide an analysis of engagement levels on 10 engagement indicators as measured by the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE).

Although figures 1 & 2 from a descriptive perspective show increases in the levels of engagement on many indicators, an inferential analysis of the results shows that in first-year students, there was a significant difference for only one indicator: Quality of interaction (p=0.000), with a significantly higher mean score reported in 2014.

For senior students, two engagement indicators showed significant differences between 2013 and 2014: Quality of interaction (p=0.000) and Supportive Environment (p=0.017), with significantly higher mean scores reported for both indicators in 2014.

These results show that although we are making progress a more intentional approach is needed to further improve overall engagement scores. Some of the initiatives that may contribute to significant gains are quality of interaction and supportive campus environment for seniors which the tutorial initiative in the Faculties of Education (p.29) and Humanities (p.33) explains. Further, the Academic Facilitation approach provides an example




| Legend: | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| HO | Higher-order Learning | DD | Discussions with diverse others |
| RI | Reflective and integrative Learning | SS | Student-staff Interaction |
| LS | Learning Strategies | ET | Effective Teaching Practices |
| QR | Quantitative Reasoning | QI | Quality of Interaction |
| CL | Collaborative Learning | SE | Supportive Environment |

**Figure 1 & 2:** UFS first-years and seniors' engagement levels measured by means of the SASSE Engagement Indicators.

of faculty specific customisation of tutorials (p.33). The study of attendance of tutorials on the Qwaqwa campus highlights the importance of contextual understanding of how academic support initiatives are implemented (p.35). To add to this, the analysis of the quality of academic advising emphasises that positive strides are being made in the right direction, as well as where improvements can be made (p.36).[1]

## Building an organisation for change and teaching and learning leadership

Effective change towards better quality teaching and learning in an institution is only possible through internal organisational support that combines top-down and bottom-up initiatives that evolve over time. Understanding the role of various change agents (leaders, academics, students and support staff) is essential for building a quality teaching culture (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). Kuh (2005) emphasises that student learning and success is not the result of one initiative, but needs to become "everybody's business" through the academic, support and leadership structures of a university. In terms of improving organisation support for better teaching and learning, the CTL has continuous work under the auspices of the Vice-Rector: Academic. This ensures that the majority of the Teaching Development Grant (77%) is spent in faculties. For example, on strengthening teaching learning support in faculties through the appointment of Teaching and Learning Coordinators to assist Teaching and Learning Managers, the payment of tutors, etc. The remaining 23% is used by CTL to manage, monitor and evaluate the impact in the work faculties and to implement projects in which CTL has been tasked. Monthly meetings with Teaching and Learning Managers ensure that there is continuous communication of faculty needs to the CTL. In addition to improving teaching and learning structures, the CTL in consultation with faculties has developed the Academic Leadership Programme (ALP). This is aimed at empowering Heads of Departments and other academic leaders with global benchmarked training to help them manage complex challenges in academic departments and faculties (p.40). Additionally, the case study on the Arbinger approach shares an innovative method to develop healthy and productive work environments within the UFS (p.44).

## Aligning institutional policies to foster quality teaching and learning

The alignment of institutional policies is critical for creating an environment that promotes quality teaching and learning for student success. More specific policy areas that need to cohere are: human resources; information and computing technology, learning environments, student support, and internationalisation (Henard & Roseveare, 2012).

The approval of the TLS is the first step to creating a framework within which teaching and learning policies and practices could be reviewed and re-aligned. The bi-annual digital identity study provides essential information to monitor the use of technology in teaching and learning and allows the UFS to anticipate infrastructure needs related to technology (p.47). The articles on the Extended LLB Programme (p.50) and the Theology Certificate (p.53) provide programmatic examples of how access policies and approaches need to be continuously reviewed and improved.

## Highlighting innovation as a driver for change

Innovation in teaching and learning poses the risk of threatening students and staff and therefore requires careful pre-implementation planning and conjoint monitoring to ensure that the risk of unintended consequences is avoided (Henard & Roseveare, 2012). Factors that may catalyse innovation in teaching and learning are curriculum renewal, internationalisation, fresh approaches to increasing access, initiatives to promote retention and success, as well as adaptation to new learning environments made possible by technologies that accommodate the needs of different students.

In this report, innovations around access in Law and Humanities within the context of policy reform are revealed. The case study "Making maths more manageable" provides an inspiring example of how innovative pedagogy, based on the latest research, can contribute to quality learning and student success (p.55).

In as similar way, the introduction of academic success skills in UFS101 provides an example of how high impact practices need to be developed and monitored within the South African context (p.58). Adding to this, the Module Makeover Project is an example of how CTL works in collaboration with academics on transforming the quality of their courses (p.61).

1 For a more detailed report on student engagement results, refer to the SASSE Annual Report 2015, "Promoting access with success for all students through engagement", retrievable from: <sasse.ufs.ac.za>.

## Evidence-based change through assessment

Realistic assessment of the current quality of teaching and learning at the institution is an essential starting point for improvement. Evaluation of both the support of teaching and learning and the quality of teaching and learning is essential to help further a culture of evidence-based change and improvement. This includes the use of a variety of assessment methods including qualitative and quantitative evaluations of teaching and learning.

The importance of data analytics in creating more of a robust understanding of student success in a specific faculty and department is highlighted on p.65.

Similarly, the article on the General English Literacy module illustrates the potentially powerful contribution that the front-loading of language development support can provide for students who are second language English speakers (p.68). In addition, the Questionmark project explores new ways of improving the quality of assessment and feedback to students, while still cutting down on the marking of academics (p.71). Hence, this demonstrates how modern outlooks on assessment improve the quality of teaching and learning.

## Graduate attributes

Research shows that carefully identified graduate attributes are globally recognised as being a critical outcome of higher education (De la Harpe & David, 2012). The Higher Education Quality Committee's (HEQC), Draft Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement, defines quality student learning in South African higher education as: "a combination of an increase in the number of graduates that have attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable" (HEQC, 2013).

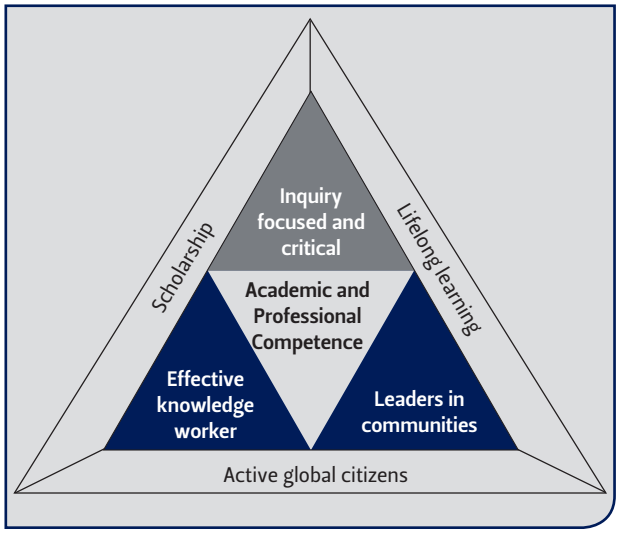



Figure 3: Graphic representation of the proposed UFS graduate attributes (Barrie, 2004).

The development of the Student Skills Portal is an example of how CTL, in collaboration with stakeholders, is working towards better quality online support for student skills development. The culmination of this work will be the creation of a digital portfolio where students will be able to provide prospective employers with evidence of the graduate attributes they developed during their studies at the UFS (p.74).

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# RAISING AWARENESS OF QUALITY TEACHING

# Raising awareness and promoting quality in faculties

Dr Corlia Janse van Vuuren and Elzmarie Oosthuizen

Faculty Teaching and Learning Managers (TLMs) play a vital role in improving quality. Both the following examples show how particular faculty contexts require approaches to further the quality of teaching and learning. The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) works closely with TLMs to help support and where necessary back faculty initiatives.

## Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS)

The awareness of teaching and learning within the Faculty has improved during the past two years mainly due to a structured, layered approach. Three distinct, but interconnected layers for communication and awareness can be identified at departmental level, faculty level and institutional level (see Figure 1).

Within this structure, teaching and learning planning, actions and feedback have been centrally located and mostly managed on the faculty level. This creates a central point from where feedback and feed-forward communication and action exist to both other levels.

Firstly, this, has created an environment in which academic and support staff felt supported and "heard" by both the other (higher) levels. A supportive atmosphere has created opportunities for innovative thinking, classroom testing of ideas, and ultimately personal, professional and departmental development within teaching and learning.

Secondly, this structure has also ensured a structured, "one message" communication and action system from institutional level down to departmental level. This has prevented communication gaps as well as miscommunication with regard to the strategic decisions, outcomes and plans for teaching and learning at the UFS and the Faculty.

The success of this structure has been further enhanced by the support for, and commitment towards teaching and learning from all role-players on the central faculty level (driven by the TLM, in cooperation with the Dean and the faculty management team). This ensures that initiatives, communication and action to both other levels has been well structured and articulated.

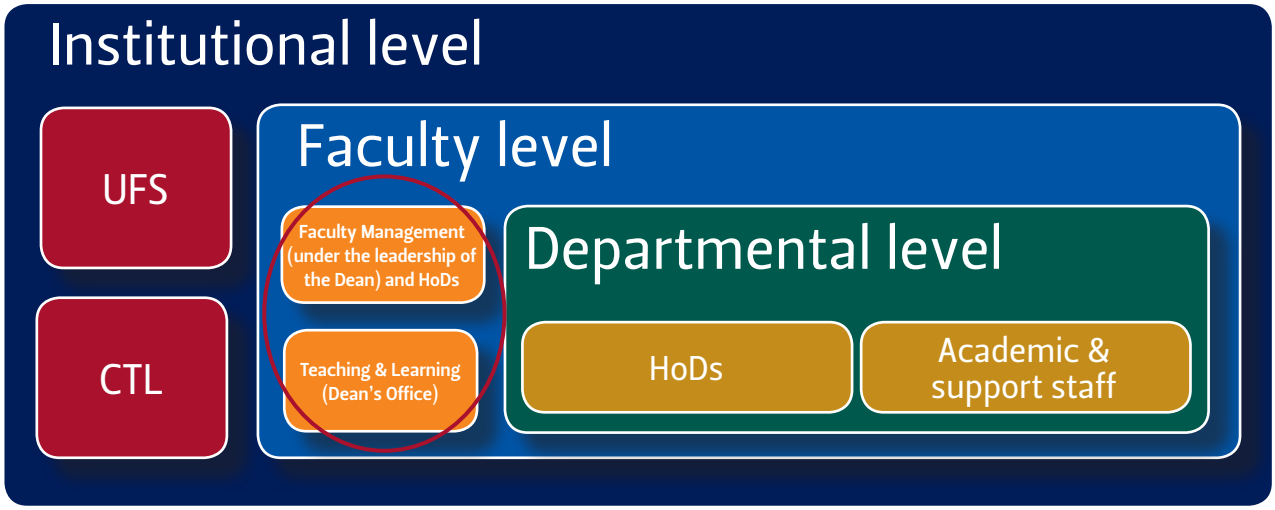


**Figure 1:** A structured, layered approach to Teaching and Learning.

Examples of successes achieved within this structure include amongst others the reviewing and restructuring of the EMS class timetable, the reviewing and upgrading of all module information on the PeopleSoft system, the development of an extensive EMS syllabus booklet and the implementation of the EMS module pyramid.

The reviewing and the restructuring of the EMS class timetable was imbedded in all three layers of the TL structure (as explained in Figure 1). Centrally, the process was supported by Faculty management and driven by a faculty level committee including members of all the departments within the faculty. The role of this committee was firstly feed-back and feed-forward communication to and from all academics and other role players at departmental level. Secondly, the committee was also involved with continuous feed-back and feed-forward communication at institutional level. This includes the Academic Timetable and Venue section of Student Academic Services as well as representatives from other applicable faculties. Success is evident in the relationships established between EMS and the timetable representatives of the other faculties as well as with institutional structures. These relationships now continuously function by taking a reciprocal approach in which no timetable decisions in any of faculties are taken in isolation. This results in a major decrease of clashes on students' as well as academics' timetables, not only in EMS, but across all faculties involved. A decrease in clashes is more supportive of student learning and may be regarded as a contributing factor to the increase in module success rates within EMS. Academics also value these changes due to a decrease in time spent on administrative duties related to class timetables. In addition, there is an increase in opportunities for students to attend all their classes, thus possibly becoming more successful in their studies. Building on these successes, the same structure should therefore be applied to the test timetable in future.

The process of reviewing and upgrading module information on the PeopleSoft system which linked to the national curriculum review process, furthermore raised awareness of teaching and learning within EMS to a large extent. This process was also centrally driven from faculty level by the EMS teaching and learning manager, with the support and collaboration of the Dean and Heads of Departments. Due to the challenges this process posed to academics, it was conducted mostly on an individual basis, improving interaction between the EMS teaching and learning office and academics within the faculty immensely. Besides improving the quality of module information on PeopleSoft, this process has also paved the way for closer collaboration within the faculty at departmental and faculty levels. Similarly, this creates a shared interest amongst faculty members. Building on the successful review and upgrading of module information, the faculty is currently involved in the development of an extensive EMS syllabus booklet.

Initially, the EMS syllabus booklet included the learning outcomes for each module. This is now supplemented with a detailed exposition of the content of each module, indicating the link between learning outcomes and module content. Both these processes were once again positioned within the layered structure for teaching and learning within EMS (see Figure 1) with mutual benefits at departmental, institutional and central faculty level. Following on the successes achieved with this layered structure, the faculty is in the beginning stages of moving beyond this structure with an additional layer for external stakeholders.

This would be the anticipated outcome for the extensive EMS syllabus booklet. This would ease interaction and collaboration with external stakeholders such as professional bodies, other higher education institutions and employers of faculty graduates.

A final process within EMS which continuously raises awareness of teaching and learning, is the use of the EMS module pyramid. This pyramid allows for data collection within each undergraduate module within a three year cycle, driven at faculty level by the Teaching and Learning Office. The success of this model is based on the individual interaction of academics with specific module data. Simultaneously, this addresses teaching and learning challenges, needs and innovation within each module. Furthermore, this model creates a central data point which academics may access at any time. Therefore, the administrative load created by data collection and reporting is decreased. Within the layered structure for teaching and learning in EMS (see Figure 1), this model thus allows for communication to both departmental and individual levels. It also maintains structured, readily available communication to the higher, institutional level.

In conclusion, the layered structure for teaching and learning within EMS, thus provides a successful environment for raising awareness and developing teaching and learning within the EMS Faculty and even beyond.

## Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (NAS)

Various authors like Storberg-Walker, Torraco (2004) and Kezar (2007) indicate that the success of large-scale changes with a high impact on academic faculties depend on two factors, namely the human factor and the academic culture. Therefore, in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences, the initiative to raise awareness and sensitise academics about their importance in

sustainable student performance and success is crucial. This has taken place by changing the quality of teaching, focusing on influential individual academics and on creating a paradigm shift in terms of the Faculty's culture.

Most academics in the faculty are stereotyped to have an *either/or* (it's either right or wrong) view of students as well as of teaching and learning. Interestingly, staff perspectives have often been based on perceptions and not facts and changing this culture has taken significant effort. Over a period of five years, small triumphs have continuously been shared to motivate staff and create momentum. Through this process, the lack of knowledge and resistance to talk about changing teaching and learning practices has started to shift. A willingness to participate in discussions and contribute to the development of faculty specific teaching and learning strategies with measurable implementation objectives can now be seen.

Head of Departments and academics are now much more aware about teaching and learning issues. This is evident in their efforts to participate in the development of a faculty teaching and learning strategy, participation in academic staff development initiatives, and nomination for teaching and learning awards. It is also seen in participation in improving study guides and the support they provide to students. In 2014, the faculty won five of the nine institutional Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards. Two of these awards were won on the Qwaqwa campus, whereas three academics from this faculty were runner-ups in the other categories. Five years ago, academics would only engage in teaching and learning initiatives if they were directly approached and almost coerced discussions about learning and teaching as well as initiatives to improve practices are now driven within departments. Key role players in moving the needle and promoting better quality teaching and learning are programme directors, all academics who act as the link in the NAS Faculty between department's academics, their students and officials in the student administration.

The Harvard expert, John Kotter (2007) proposes an eight step model for leading change. One of the steps in this model is to form a powerful guiding coalition. In the faculty programme, directors have played a vital role in the creation of such a coalition to help lead and manage the change process. They are some of the most influential individuals in academic departments, and were approached by the teaching and learning manager to act as change agents. The teaching and learning manager worked with them to develop processes and systems to manage their core roles and responsibilities in a more structured way. Although there was initial resistance to these changes from some colleagues, this soon dissipated when staff could see the benefits and gains of a structured approach. These gains have contributed towards raising the awareness bar and sensitising academics about learning and teaching issues.

After the coalition with programme directors was established, other elements in the Kotter model, such as communicating a vision and planning and creating short term wins were used.

A vision was communicated by creating staff awareness of the importance and relevance of quality teaching and learning. Short term gains were regularly communicated in terms of increased throughput rates where structured improvement interventions were developed and applied. The increased overall throughput rate was used to contextualise the relevance of the change for individuals, departments and the institution. Another important element to help institutionalise a quality approach to teaching and learning was to counter documented resistance to change as a "fad that will pass". The strategy used to counter this was to create deliberate opportunities for regular communication and interaction with individuals to help maintain the momentum.

In conclusion, changes in teaching and learning emphasize how critical it is to engage all stakeholders in a change initiative. During the development of the faculty teaching and learning strategy, programme directors and staff from CTL assisted in creating a conducive environment for Faculty Management.

To do this, a paradigm shift away from an "either/or" perspective about students, teaching and learning and more towards "a both/and" perspective needs to be in effect. By doing this, the link between the empowerment of academics to develop effective pedagogical skills and therefore to deliver more skilled graduates is seen as critical for the development of a research intensive institution.

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# Using the Classroom Survey of Student Engagement (CLASSE) to empower staff to improve their teaching practices

Hanle Posthumus and Lana Hen-Boisen

The quality of teaching can either promote or hinder student engagement which is linked to student success in the classroom. The Classroom Survey of Student Engagement (CLASSE) was created to diagnose student engagement levels and captures the information between lecturers and students in a particular module. The CLASSE has therefore positioned itself as an evidence-based student engagement indicator in the classroom. In addition to this, when the results are combined with the online support system, the lecturer is directed to valuable Student Engagement Techniques which impacts the quality of teaching in the classroom.

The survey was designed to gather data from two points of view, that of the lecturer ($CLASSE_{Lecturer}$) and that of the students ($CLASSE_{Student}$). Lecturers rate the importance of practices within their class and students give the frequency at which they engage therein. The items in CLASSE are based on "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education" (Chickering and Gamson, 1987). These principles: student-staff contact; cooperation among students; active learning; prompt feedback; time on task; high expectations and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning form the basis of student engagement. Questions are also asked based on Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), as well as about study habits and how interested students are in the class.

In order for lecturers to adapt their teaching styles effectively, it is important for them to see the comparison between what they see as important and what students are doing. Lecturers are asked about the importance they assign to certain experiences in their classes in the $CLASSE_{Lecturer}$ and not on what they think students are doing. The report created after a class has participated in CLASSE contains a section on the respondent characteristics of the students, a section on the frequency distribution of each question and a quadrant analysis, comparing these results together in a visually helpful manner.

In the quadrant analysis (Figure 1) the lecturers' ratings of importance are shown on the vertical axis and the horizontal axis displays the frequency that the students reported. These form four quadrants in which the results of the survey are plotted by means of showing the different survey questions that would fall in each quadrant. This points out gaps between lecturers and students and directs a lecturer's efforts towards improving teaching.

The upper right and lower left quadrants show items where lecturers and students agree and the lecturer's importance assigned to the activity matches the frequency the students are partaking in that particular activity. On the other hand, the upper left quadrant shows items that lecturers regard as being important or very important but students report doing at a below average frequency. The activities measured by the questions in this quadrant are seen as the opportunities for improvement. Lecturers are encouraged to look at this quadrant first before making changes to their teaching methods or the class environment. Lastly, the lower right quadrant points out activities that lecturers regard as somewhat or not important but that students report doing at an above average frequency.

Results from CLASSE quadrant analysis aids lecturer awareness of the activities on which their students spend the most time. By comparing this to the importance they assign to these practices they are therefore able to identify opportunities for improvement.

## Online referral to Student Engagement Techniques (SET's)

Once the lecturer has received their quadrant analysis, they are referred to the CLASSE website where multiple techniques or strategies to address certain challenges are provided. Elizabeth Barkley's (2010) book, "*Student Engagement Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*", provides techniques that can assist lecturers in redesigning lecturing processes. The questions in CLASSE have been aligned with the different techniques explained in Barkley's (2010) book. Each technique gives the lecturer step-by-step instructions to apply in the classroom and also ways to possibly implement the technique online. Additionally, there are examples from different fields as well as variations and extensions which can help a lecturer adjust the technique to suit his/her specific discipline. Introductions to these techniques can be viewed on the SASSE website at, sasse.ufs.ac.za by clicking on "Using your Quadrant analysis".

Another benefit for lecturers is the fact that the tool is used as a diagnostic measure and in no way serves to report on the competencies of a lecturer. This allows staff developers to have positive conversations with lecturers about possible improvements in their classes and without confrontation.

## CLASSE Participation

The benefits from CLASSE can be confirmed with the evaluations of those lecturers' involved with the Champs programme who used the tool in their modules. The programme was presented at the Qwaqwa campus of the UFS with the aim to help academics realise that the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) can lead to improved teaching practices and student success. The CLASSE was first administered in ten modules with seven lecturers (Table 1).

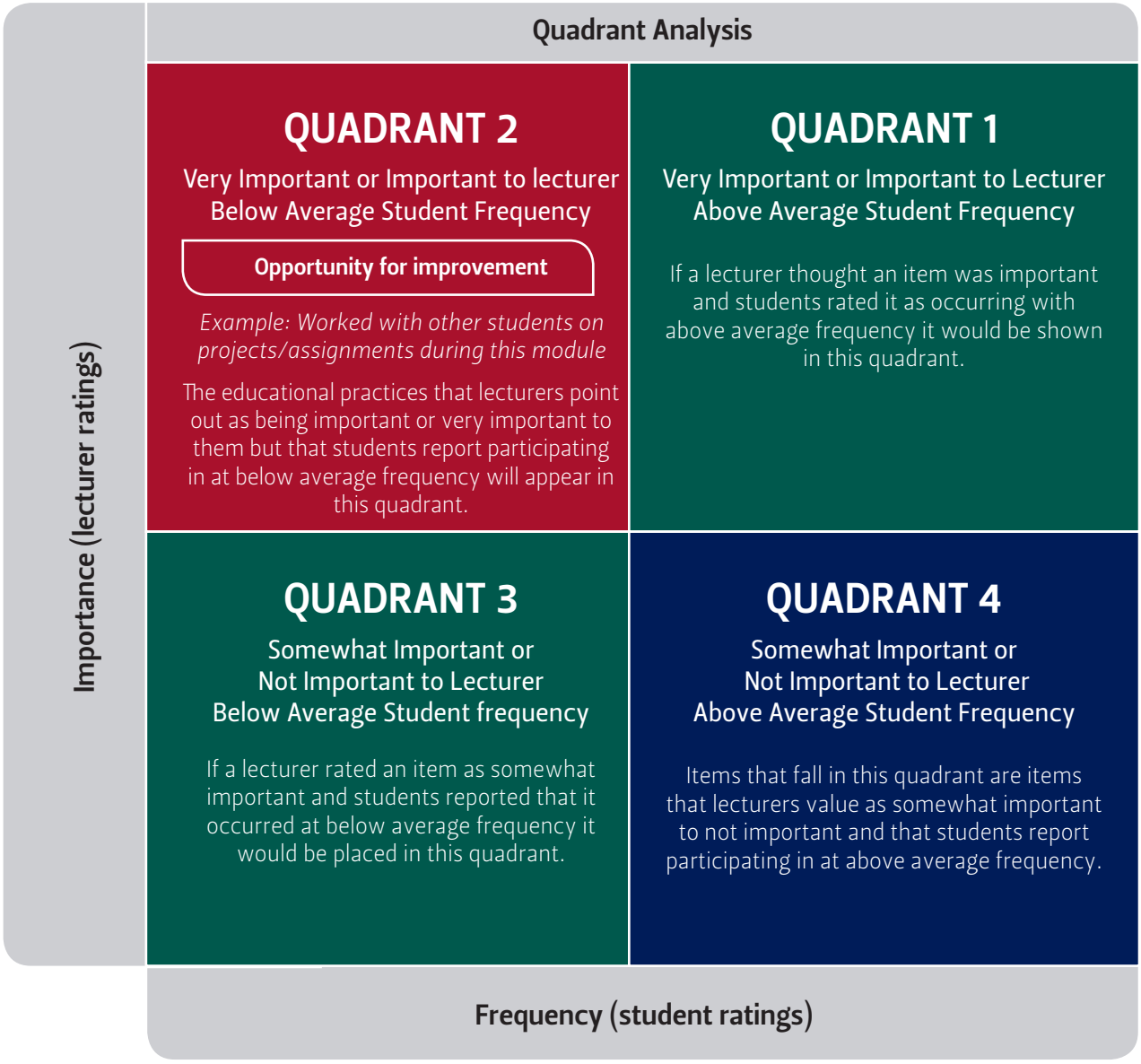


**Figure 1:** The quadrant analysis compares the students' frequency and lecturers' importance rating for a specific module.

| UFS Qwaqwa Campus: Faculties | Modules |
|---|---|
| Economic and Management Sciences | 5 |
| Humanities | 1 |
| Natural and Agricultural Sciences | 4 |
| Total | 10 |

Table 1: Distribution of modules from the Champs programme who participated in CLASSE.

Reports from all lecturers stated that they would definitely use CLASSE again in their modules and that they see it as very important for lecturers and students in general to complete the CLASSE survey. They were also positive that they would use the results from CLASSE to improve their modules. When asked how they would use the CLASSE data, one lecturer reported:

> *"I think the quadrant analysis will be the best way to go. Having an indication on where I "miss" my students' expectations can focus my attempts in a new direction. Trying to find out why students answered in a specific way may help to eliminate the pitfalls of thinking it's all OK."*

Following this administration of CLASSE at the Qwaqwa campus, there has been consequent administrations at the UFS as well as at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2015. Table 2 shows the breakdown of these modules.

| Faculty | Modules |
|---|---|
| University of the Free State | |
| Education | 1 |
| Economic and Management Sciences | 17 |
| Humanities | 4 |
| Natural and Agricultural Sciences | 5 |
| University of the Witwatersrand | |
| Engineering and the Built Environment | 1 |
| Commerce, Law and Management | 2 |
| Humanities | 2 |
| Science | 1 |
| Total | 33 |

Table 2: Distribution of modules involved in CLASSE.

## Conclusion

Through the CLASSE, lecturers are provided with a diagnostic tool which provides them with the knowledge and opportunity to improve their teaching and learning practices, thus encouraging their overall awareness of quality teaching. Furthermore, the CLASSE online referral to Student Engagement Techniques contributes to the development of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and promotes a reflective approach to pedagogy. Therefore, the CLASSE contributes to the awareness of quality teaching which is vital for the improvement of student success at the UFS.

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# Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards

Marissa Grobbelaar

Celebrating excellent teaching and learning is the highlight of the year. The Centre for Teaching and Learning has had the honour of managing the Excellence Awards since 2012. In the process it has managed to showcase extraordinary teaching and learning as well as meet academics with a real passion for teaching.

The Excellence Awards strive to recognise and create awareness of quality teaching and learning and also to create a platform to share best practice and inspire innovation in others. Past Excellence Award nominees were asked what impact the Excellence Awards has on their teaching. They responded:

*"In a quest to really establish excellence – you can think aloud, make yourself vulnerable in front of colleagues, and the feedback would add value to your current practice... the platform (ETL awards) where I can invite every single colleague to come and test their ideas." – Joe Serekoane 2013, 2014, 2015 Innovation nominee*

*"... a deeply satisfying experience where one is forced to look at yourself in the mirror and take stock of who you are, what you believe in and what your philosophy is." – Louise van den Berg 2015 Vice-Chancellor nominee*

*"This initiative means that we are being rewarded for what we love doing, and that in itself is an award." - Jamie-lee Nortje 2015 Innovation nominee*

*"When we showcase and we share with each other, we actually learn and grow." – Naquita Fernandes 2014 Innovation winner & 2015 Vice-Chancellor nominee.*

**Figure 1:** Vice Chancellor's Team Award winners: (from left) Dr Lis Lange, Naquita Fernandes, Salomien Boshoff, Elanie Myburgh and Prof Francois Strydom.

Figure 2: The 2015 Excellence in Teaching and Learning nominees with CTL management and Dr Lis Lange.

Over the years, the format of the awards has evolved to complement the quality and innovation that the award nominees inspire. A portfolio of evidence is compiled for the Vice-Chancellor's Award and is aligned with the criteria and standard set by the HELTASA National Excellence in Teaching and Learning Award. Similarly, the Innovation Award nominees have to compile a video entry that showcases their excellent teaching practices. In 2015, the review process was re-considered to raise the quality and profile of the awards to match the growing quality of the entries received. Rubrics for the Innovation awards were drawn up from scratch to be more criteria focused and to ensure congruency among entries as well as fair and consistent feedback from reviewers. Rubrics for the Vice-Chancellor's Award were aligned with the HELTASA criteria to ensure for excellence at a national level.

From 2015 onward, the top two candidates for the Vice-Chancellor's Award will automatically be nominated for the National HELTASA awards.

The Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards has not only positioned itself in acknowledging academic achievement and innovation, but also has a valuable role in sharing best practices between staff at the UFS thus raising the profile of teaching and learning at the university.

The winners for the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Awards were as follows:

## 2015 Bloemfontein

### Vice-Chancellor's Award

#### Individual

- Louise van den Berg (Health Sciences)

#### Teaching team

- Salomien Boshoff and Naquita Fernandes (Economic and Management Sciences)

### Innovation Awards

#### Engagement and Learning

- Rentia Engelbrecht, Jolandi Bezuidenhout and Jamie-Lee Nortje (Humanities)
- Lerato Sekonyela, Economic and Management Sciences (Economic and Management Sciences)

#### Curriculum Design

- Joyce Ras (Economic and Management Sciences)
- Adre le Roux and Frans Kruger (Education)

#### Community Engagement

- Ielse Seale and Karen Venter (Health Sciences)
- Martin Oliver (Economic and Management Sciences)

#### Assessment Practices

- Salomien Boshoff, (Economic and Management Sciences)
- Joyce Ras (Economic and Management Sciences)

## 2015 Qwaqwa

### Excellence in Teaching and Learning Practice

#### Student engagement methods

- Marga Stander (Centre for Teaching and Learning)
- Ntebohiseng Sekhele (Natural Sciences)

#### Design of your course

- Grey Magaiza (Humanities)

#### Assessment methods

- Eleanor Bernard (Centre for Teaching and Learning)
- Fani Radebe (Natural Sciences)

#### Use of technology

- Lea Koenig (Natural Sciences)
- Eleanor Bernard (Centre for Teaching and Learning)

### Excellence in Teaching and Learning Research

#### TL research articles

- Emile Bredenhand (Natural Sciences)
- Ben Mase (Natural Sciences)

### Honorary Awards

#### Department showing TL progress

- Department of Sociology

#### Students' Lecturer

- Mandla Ndlangamandla (Economic and Management Sciences)

# DEVELOPING EXCELLENT TEACHERS

# Redesigning academic staff development for greater impact – a reflection on personalising professional development

Marissa Grobbelaar

Every academic has their own ideology or philosophy about what teaching is and how learning works. These philosophies are often deeply rooted within the discipline in which academics find themselves. The challenge for staff development is how to negotiate around these philosophies in order to develop a deeper understanding of teaching and learning. This is coupled with opportunities to develop the abilities and skills required of the different roles which are required by academics. Harden and Crosby (2000) recognise the different roles of an academic as a teacher, assessor, role model, planner, information provider, resource developer and facilitator.

## The true aim is therefore to create scholars of teaching and learning. But how do we accomplish this at the University of the Free State?

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) conducted focus-groups within the various faculties of the University of the Free Sate from 2012 to 2013. This needs analysis served as a guideline for developing the staff development interventions that are available through the Academic Staff Development (ASD) division within the CTL. However, a re-evaluation of these interventions are necessary since the Higher Education sphere changes so rapidly and institutional expectations regarding the quality of teaching are ever increasing. A recent survey asked academics involved in the Module Makeover process to identify what support, provided by CTL, they require. Figure 1 depicts their responses to the available options:

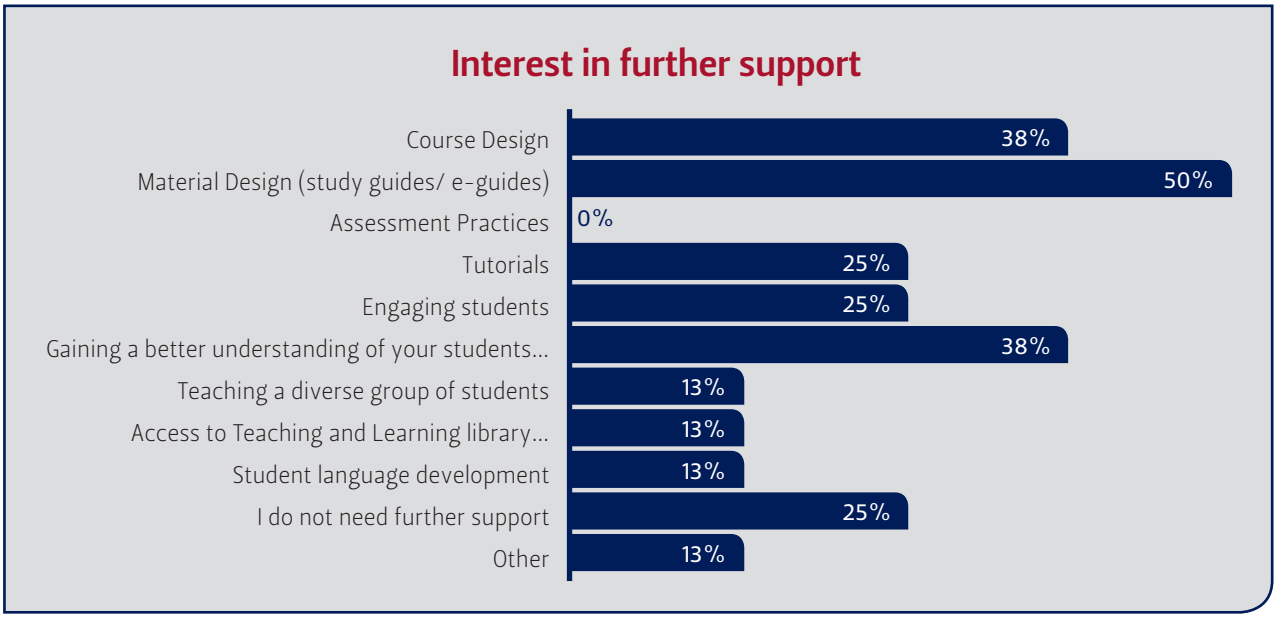


**Figure 1:** Academics' interest in further support from CTL.

Further support alluded to include assistance with handling large classes as well as the necessary skills and tools to effectively Flip-the-Classroom.

All staff development interventions are planned and developed with target groups in mind. ASD is sensitive to the needs of academics and therefore value their feedback. Courses are updated before each offering based on the qualitative feedback received from attendees, as well as to include the most up to date information. During 2015, ASD reached out to all attendees of the 3 core-courses since their first offering.

The aim of this was in order to find out if the courses achieved what they intended by providing academics with the knowledge and skills to design, assess and teach their courses.

Two questions were asked, firstly, regarding participant satisfaction with the course, and secondly, their ability to implement what they learned (Figure 2).

Participants' responses to the first question, show a high satisfaction rate in the content and value of the courses presented. On a scale from 1 being "Not at all beneficial" to 5 being "Extremely beneficial", the majority of respondents reported a score of 4 out of 5.

The participants' responses to the second question regarding the lecturers' ability to implement what they have learned in the courses yielded the following results. The majority of lecturers (77%) were able to implement what they learned into their teaching practices. Only 23% of the lecturers responded that they had not been able to apply what they had learned. Though most lecturers would have liked to implement changes, the main reasons why they did not are because of a lack of time and timing of implementation.

Determining a date to present courses so that all attendees can benefit from it equally is an almost impossible task. Therefore, for 2016 ASD is investing time in developing flexible just-in-time learning opportunities. Flexible learning is one way to create professional development opportunities which are more easily available to academics. It allows for flexible place, time, pace and style, as well as being a pathway to provide learning opportunities that are accessible in different ways to suit the time and specific need of the learner (Chen, 2003).

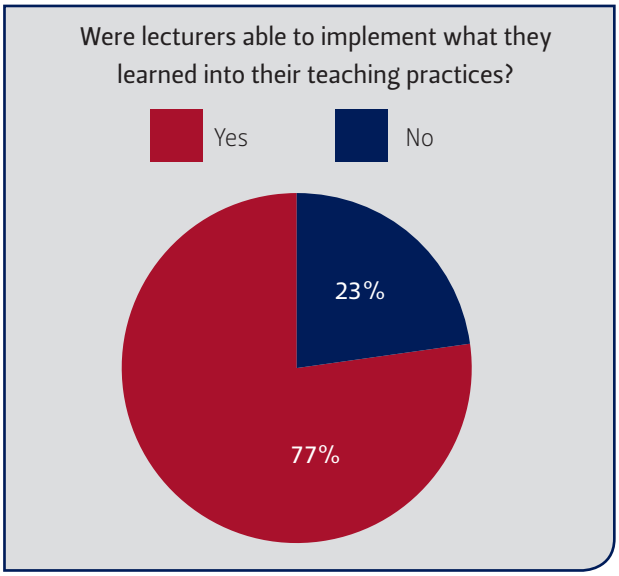


**Figure 2:** Lecturers' ability to implement what they learned into their teaching practices.

## Enhancing quality through faculty-specific interventions

Anyone who has ever been in a room with academics from differing disciplines and faculties has heard the phrase "yes, but you need to remember that we are different – in our faculty it does not work the same way", or some variation thereof. Is this statement reason enough to forego the traditional approach of offering generic interventions to all academics? Would it be wiser to embrace instead, the unique challenges and conceptions that each faculty offers and develop targeted interventions? The answer to these questions could be yes and no.

## What are the benefits of offering faculty-specific interventions?

Academics within the same or related disciplines often have shared beliefs regarding learning and teaching as well as having similar challenges. Smyth (2003), offers the following as explanation:

> *"Philosophers such as the twentieth century German, Jurgen Habermas, and educational theorists such as Mezirow, Trigwell, and Prosser postulate that individuals will generally be guided in their thinking about most things, including the processes of teaching and learning, by the principles of the dominant experiences from which their knowledge has thus far been constructed".*

Academic staff development has to take into account that faculties experience different challenges in terms of teaching and learning and that their unique discipline might require a different solution to the rest. Personalising staff development creates development opportunities that are valuable and useful in meeting the growing expectations that higher education institutions face. In addition, they assist in achieving faculty teaching and learning targets.

Although ASD has big plans for moving to more faculty-specific interventions, current requests from departments focused on training in the use of particular teaching technologies. Prezi training is a very popular request from faculties for different reasons. During 2015 targeted Prezi workshops were offered to among others, the Faculty of Health Sciences as a means to develop more lively presentations. Prezi is also used for a group assignment to explore more flexible ways of doing group work in a large class. The students receive Prezi training and practice with the concurrent collaboration feature in Prezi.

Further benefits of a faculty-specific approach are that once a specific faculty is familiar with ASD, mutual trust is built and a shared sense of responsibility is developed. This could lead to faculties/individuals more readily making use of the available support or resources within CTL regarding challenges or new endeavours they undertake. Many faculties already have teaching and learning strategies in place and the role of ASD is not to replace that. Rather, it aims to work together with them and offer support where possible. This type of approach creates wider interest in teaching and learning as more staff start to become aware and make use of the interventions that are relevant or useful to them. In this way, it is possible to move towards quality of teaching and learning on a wider scale.

## How to go about creating personalised academic staff development?

### 1. The Finish Line Challenge

To be able to identify Teaching and Learning (TL) challenges and offer up solutions or support, the academic staff development division first needs to get to know that division, specifically the academics, the students and the curriculum. In order to do this, ASD challenges departments to play The Finish Line. The Finish Line is a board game developed by the CTL using data from the South African Survey of Student Engagement (SASSE) to create authentic experiences of students in higher education. The objective of the game is to place oneself in a student's shoes and discover which experiences help or hinder students during their studies. The game also offers opportunities to discuss these experiences and reflect on why a certain experience moves a student towards or away from reaching a goal. This serves as an excellent platform to explore the teaching and learning conceptions at play and to discover specific challenges that a department may have. Smyth (2003) expressed that "dominant values are generally identifiable in behaviours such as verbal and written communications or positions expressed during dialogue". Further reflection after the game in the form of discussions and a nominal group technique serve as a guideline to develop targeted interventions that are relevant to the academics involved.

Collaborating with the Module Makeover Exploratorium, ASD challenged departments to play The Finish Line. One such department was Criminology who invited ASD to play it with their academic staff. An interesting observation from one lecturer was that the emotions experienced while playing the game creates the realisation of what it is that students go through during their study career and that not all students get there the same way. They felt that the game was an interesting way to discover what hinders student learning.

A challenge that was identified by this department was how to get students to make use of the various support systems available within the department and on campus. Lecturers find that students do not make use of services even when they are referred to resources like the Write Site. Sometimes support is simply sharing of information. An idea which could help to overcome this problem came from academics in the Department of Psychology. They suggested that it would be beneficial to use The Finish Line in conjunction with module evaluations. In this way, it would be possible to also gain student perceptions of lecturers which would help in planning and adapting teaching practices.

Other forms of informal and formal needs analysis will be conducted throughout 2016 in order to gain a better insight into how academics perceive TL, what challenges they face and what their aspirations are.

### 2. Grow your Career

To complete the set of core-modules offered, Grow your Career was launched in May 2015. This course is mainly self-reflective and aimed at guiding academics to plot a career path by setting career goals, discovering their values and drivers and establishing a career development plan.

Although it can't be considered a faculty-specific intervention, it is definitely a form of personalised development.

The main aim of the course is not to give attendees a clear set path that they have to follow but rather to allow them to discover what their drivers are and set their career path accordingly. Increasing pressure on academics for a research output has left academics wondering what their options for growth and promotion are. There is often a lot of pressure within academic institutions that requires them to teach, conduct research, partake in community service, administration and leadership duties, while also being exceptional scholars.

These activities, in essence, form the career matrix at the UFS. Within this matrix, academics have the freedom to plot their career goals and determine areas for focused development. Grow your Career will also form part of a larger programme focused on developing academic leadership at the UFS.

## 3. Using webinars to create scholars

> *"The most important attitude that can be found is the desire to go on learning" – John Dewey.*

Becoming scholars of teaching and learning involves becoming life-long learners. To support the development of SoTL, ASD strives to create opportunities for shared practice and deeper reflection within the UFS community.

Webinars and learning communities offer a great opportunity for academics to develop a shared language, not just within their discipline but within the wider UFS community. A webinar is essentially a seminar conducted over the internet or web. Webinars are live-streamed and attendees have the benefit of joining in from the luxury of their own offices with a specific link and password.

ASD launched their first Webinar in September with the focus of providing real examples, straight from the mouths of lecturers. ASD invited Cornelie Crous from the Centre for Accounting to share what strategies were implemented to increase student success and guide learning in a more meaningful way. During 2014, the Centre worked with the Teaching and Learning Manager, Corlia Janse van Vuuren, on teaching and learning strategies to increase the throughput in the department. In addition, ASD facilitated a session suggesting strategies that could address some of the challenges. The Webinar shared some of the strategies that were implemented and showed the increase in student throughput as a result of the student centred approached followed during 2015.

Through webinars, academics have the chance to share their TL experiences with their peers, thereby opening avenues to explore different teaching approaches. They gain feedback and valuable advice on a specific approaches' values or pitfalls.

In essence, it is a sharing of recipes or tools for teaching. Furthermore, learning communities enhance scholarly practice by prompting deeper reflection into TL pedagogies and developing a network of support collaboration.

For staff development to achieve greater impact, it should target the needs of the academic and the institution, as well as the challenges presented by the changing landscape of higher education.

Personalising staff development and allowing for flexible learning increases opportunities for professional development, thereby raising the quality of teaching and encouraging life-long learning.

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# Difficult Dialogues: Deep listening, deep thinking, deep learning

Dr Deirdre van Jaarsveldt

The intertwinement of citizenship and university life cannot be denied. During 2015, student protests (#RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall and *Luister*), including debates about the language policies of South African universities accentuated this fact. Through these events the need to "be heard" formed a recurrent theme that underlines the importance of developing classroom climates that promote respectful dialogue on relevant and contemporary societal issues.

Classroom practices of this nature are enabled by the Difficult Dialogues project because it is believed that this form of engagement can extend to society. The international mission of this initiative is therefore: "to strengthen a democratically engaged society by advancing innovative practices in higher education that promote respectful, transformative dialogue on controversial topics and complex social issues, thereby reflecting a commitment to pluralism and academic freedom" (TJCPFE, 2006). During such discussions participants can think aloud, explore supposedly settled questions and develop a fuller appreciation for the multiplicity of human experience (Brookfield and Preskill 2005:3).

Citizenship in the 21st century demands that adults master more complex ways of meaning making. In preparation for productive lives as citizens of the larger world students are consequently challenged to:

- think critically in order to weigh relevant evidence to make sound decisions;
- craft a sense of identity that honours and balances their own and others' needs;
- develop intercultural maturity to work interdependently with diverse others;
- effectively manage conflict, ambiguity, change, and multiple perspectives (Baxter Magolda 2014:25-26).

These skills can be developed through engagement in public deliberation. Deliberative dialogue in this sense involves "listening deeply to other points of view, exploring new ideas and perspectives, searching for points of agreement, and bringing unexamined assumptions into the open" (London 2010:14).

Critical reflection on the various views expressed helps the participants to question their personal assumptions and ways of thinking. Most often this leads to a broadening of one's frame of reference and could help one to overcome barriers, such as stereotypical thinking. This is what is meant by *transformative learning* where one's problematic frames of reference are transformed by a process of examining, questioning and revising one's perceptions (Cranton & Taylor 2012:5; Mezirow 2003:58). Self-awareness is therefore an important precursor to learning effectiveness, transformation and leadership.

In assisting staff members to facilitate learning opportunities of this nature, we try to create a learning environment wherein they can experience transformative dialogue. This is no easy task, not only because setting up and facilitating discussions about challenging issues that can broaden perspectives and stimulate critical self-reflection is exceptionally difficult, but also because each group is unique. We are thus dependent on continuous feedback from the participants to ensure deep engagement.

The Difficult Dialogues project has been developed by means of Action Learning/Action Research. Through experience and research we have learnt that an inclusive learning environment, where all present feel welcome,

valued and respected, is a prerequisite to deep learning (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski 2009:75). In a non-judgmental environment participants can freely express their ideas and experiences without having to defend themselves. The expressed perspectives can then be questioned and revised in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We therefore provide opportunity from the onset for participants to make their expectations explicit and to express themselves in a meaningful way that would make the discussion meaningful to them. A variety of techniques, including storytelling, are employed to encourage deep engagement, equal participation, empathy development and the surfacing of value conflicts (Brookfield & Preskill 2005:13; Mathews & McAfee 2002).

Throughout the project Critical Incident Questionnaires (CIQs), developed by Brookfield and Preskill (2005:48-50), have been completed during training on a daily basis and adjustments are made accordingly. Reflective feedback sheets are circulated at the end of each workshop. In addition, follow-up feedback has been obtained from participants by means of in-depth individual or focus group interviews, as well as open-ended surveys after they have had an opportunity to implement the project principles. Narratives are obtained from participants who have indicated that they have had deep learning experiences. Participants are encouraged to engage in scholarship by continuous study and research relating to the implementation of their learning. Thus far, ten academic articles have emerged from the project of which five have already been published and ten participants are contributing chapters to a case book about the project's implementation. Furthermore, in total, twelve conference papers, workshops and interactive sessions have been presented at conferences both nationally and internationally.

Various testimonies have been shared about how the project has changed participants' ways of thinking and doing, not only within the university environment, but also in their personal lives. One such account is indicated in the text box below. This is the story of how a legal educator was transformed through her involvement in the Difficult Dialogues project.

Together with a colleague from another South African university, this participant subsequently published an academic article: *"Legal educators – the peddler of precedent, the skill builder and the socially conscious knowledge generator"*. Here, they invite colleagues to reflect critically on legal education and on their practice. This case illustrates how a Difficult Dialogues participant moved beyond engagement in transformative dialogue to change her teaching strategy and construct of the law. This transformative process has since extended beyond her classroom to a collaborative relationship with a colleague of another South African university. In turn, this interaction resulted in a publication that engages a wider audience in transformative dialogue on the topic, thus stimulating critical reflection in wider contexts. This narrative therefore provides evidence of the accomplishment of the international mission of the Difficult Dialogues initiative.

Over the past four years, the number and variation of Difficult Dialogues training workshops has increased. During 2015, at least 250 persons, including, students, teaching assistants, tutors and staff members have participated in a variety of training workshops. Yet, numbers cannot reflect whether or not learning has taken place. How does one determine the extent to which a person has experienced personal transformation? How has this affected their functioning and the people they come into contact with? How does one measure the impact of this project?

**Figure 1:** A group discussion during the "Training the Trainer" Difficult Dialogues Workshop in 2015.

### Box 1: A Difficult Dialogues participant shares her transformative journey

The experience I have gained through incorporating the principles taught in the training informed my own teaching strategy, as well as my construct of the law and how lecturers play a pivotal role in the formation of a student's perception of the law.

The idea of voicing contemporary issues in context with a socially transformative approach through critical conversation and participation of the students single-handedly caused my own metamorphism from teaching law from a specific disposition. My LLM research thesis, conducted in 2009, centered on the idea that law students should be afforded the opportunity to practically apply the theory of law and have more opportunities to develop legal skills. In my thesis I staunchly proposed that law schools should direct the teaching of law to better equip students in terms of legal skills. My whole proposition however negates the importance of a student's understanding of the underlying construct of the law.

Skills training is definitely not the desired end based pursuit of legal education. Students should instead be instructed to develop the ability to resolve any legal dispute through a process of critical analysis of the underlying and fundamental legal principle to allow for a just outcome of any legal dispute. If we do not allow our students to challenge the "why" of the law, we will not succeed to instill any values or skills on "how" the law operates.

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# Orientation of newly appointed academic staff in the Faculty of Health Sciences

Chantel van Wyk

Newly appointed academic staff members are considered to be "bright, energetic and capable" (Jarvis, 1999). Therefore, this cohort is ideal for the introduction into the culture of academic staff development at the Faculty of Health Sciences (FoHS), University of the Free State (UFS). In health sciences the roles of an academic staff member are multidimensional and complex. According to Harden and Crosby (2000), there are twelve areas of activity for the teacher in medical education (health sciences) (Table 1). In addition to this, at the UFS, the important role of researcher is added. These roles are commonly added to the service delivery workload of many of our health professionals.

| Six main areas of activity | Sub-areas of activity in each main area |
|---|---|
| Information provider | lecturer |
| | clinical or practical teacher |
| Role model | role model in the workplace |
| | teaching role model |
| Facilitator | learning facilitator |
| | mentor |
| Assessor | assessor of student learning |
| | evaluator of the curriculum |
| Planner | curriculum planner |
| | course planner |
| Resource developer | study guide developer |
| | creator of resource material |

**Table 1:** The roles of a health sciences educator [Derived from Harden and Crosby, 2000].

Research has shown that several newly appointed health sciences educators have little or no prior teaching experience and seem to lack knowledge of important medical education concepts (Van Wyk, 2015). In addition, new academics seem to struggle to establish effective teaching styles; to developing habits of writing productivity; feel

isolated, anxious and experience great academic pressure to perform (Boice, 1992; Menges, 1999; Boyd, 2014; Van Wyk, 2015). In order to address these issues, an effective orientation course for academic staff should be in place.

## Academic staff orientation in the Faculty of Health Sciences

The Division of Health Sciences Education (DHSE) situated in the office of the Dean, FoHS annually offers an orientation course to all newly employed academic staff members. The aim of this Faculty-specific orientation course is to orientate newly appointed lecturers with regard to the FoHS and to introduce them to various health sciences education concepts.

The 2015 course was presented in six blocks, namely:

(1) Introduction to the Faculty of Health Sciences and your role as a lecturer;

(2) Curriculum design and development;

(3) Teaching and learning: Study material;

(4) Teaching and learning: Presentation of study material;

(5) Assessment and evaluation; and

(6) Master lecturer.

Reflection sheets from 30 course participants who attended the 2015 course for newly appointed lecturers in the FoHS were qualitatively analysed and form the basis of this report. The participants' responses relate to the 2015 course structure, namely:

(1) Introduction to the Faculty of Health Sciences and your role as a lecturer

- "Valuable information regarding the structure of the Faculty and where to find important contact persons";
- "My role as lecturer – OMW – I am in no way ready or prepared yet for this mammoth task"; and
- "What a revelation to have, how a lecturer should perform".

(2) Curriculum design and development

- "Now I understand where education strategies and methods fit into the bigger picture, and how a lecturer should use these tools"; and
- "It broke down practically into basics (addressing) most of the concerns that I have as beginner".

(3) Teaching and learning: Study material

- "Information regarding study material and content was most helpful to me"
- "Good to get hand-outs"; and
- "I learned that technology is not the enemy, and many ways to use it to improve the way to give class".

(4) Teaching and learning: Presentation of study material

- "The guidelines on having a clinical discussion were practical advice";
- "The tips on PowerPoint and Prezi will immediately change my presentations"; and
- "Today I learned a lot about preparing a lecture and how to deliver the lecture in the most effective way, bearing in mind that students have variable learning ways".

(5) Assessment and evaluation

- "The presentation on assessment highlighted that you should strive for elaborate assignments and to plan your assessment according to your outcomes, while being valid and reliable", and
- "The assessment process was very insightful".

(6) Master lecturer

- "The master lecturer session was very valuable as a learning experience, and a reflection on what we learnt the past two and a half days. It was a summary of the important aspects of teaching and learning";
- "Loved the opportunity to put what I've learned into practice"; and
- "Observing other lecturers gave me ideas on how to improve my lecturing style".

Holistically, the course was deemed a positive experience by most of the lecturers' feedback responses.

## Conclusion

An effective orientation course offers the opportunity to effectively transform the professional practitioner into a health sciences educator and to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the faculty. This course strengthens collegial relationships and offers effective, directed learning opportunities that will ultimately contribute to overall excellence in educational scholarship. Thus, this faculty specific orientation

course contributes positively towards a newly appointed academic staff member's experience of entering higher education. It ultimately offers the newly appointed academic staff member a head start to becoming more efficient and effective in his/her new academic roles.

**Figure 1:** Participants of the orientation course for newly appointed academic staff in the faculty.

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# ENGAGING STUDENTS

# The impact of the Academic Student Tutorial Excellence Programme (A_STEP) in the Faculty of Education

Wiets Botes

Peer education is widely associated with higher quality teaching and better learning outcomes. In order to lift the bar on student success the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) ensures the availability of the A_STEP to all Faculties in hope of bettering student learning and throughput in modules on the UFS campus (A_STEP tutor manual, 2014).

## Faculty of Education context and the A_STEP

In June 2015, relevant decision makers of the Faculty of Education (FoE) had the opportunity to meet at the Faculty's Annual Strategic Planning Summit and it was decided that the threshold for optimal student throughput was 85% for undergraduate modules. Thus, any module achieving below this recommended threshold is advised to make use of the A_STEP as a student learning support measure.

The goal of the A_STEP is to train and develop tutors, with the notion of empowering them to address and support "at-risk" modules. To confirm whether this goal was achieved in the FoE, required an analysis and assessment of certain complexities which forms part of and have a direct influence on the functionality and effectiveness of the A_STEP.

## The A_STEP Tutor Training Model

Achieving optimal tutorial efficiency requires tutors to be adequately trained and developed for their role as learning facilitators. The quality of training tutors receive is seen to have a direct influence on the effectiveness of their facilitative behaviour (Calma & Vista, 2012). Against this backdrop, the CTL aims to empower tutors to be learning facilitators by means of a highly structured training model. The training model they use comprises two unique training initiatives which are unpacked in the table below.

| | The mass training session | The Faculty-specific training session |
|---|---|---|
| Type | Phase 1:<br>Primary training session<br>(Prerequisite for the faculty-specific training session) | Phase 2:<br>Secondary training session (faculty-specific) |
| Occurrence | Biannually (start of each semester) | Multiple occasions during the course of an academic year (discretion of Faculty TLC[1]) |
| Role players and stakeholders involved | All UFS TLCs and freshman tutors | Faculty TLC, lecturers and tutors<br>(novice and experienced) |
| Rationale | To establish a uniform and standardised training environment for all freshman tutors that would lay the foundation for basic tutor' development and preparation | To establish a specialized training environment for both freshman and experienced tutors where they master additional facilitative skills that are relevant to a faculty-specific context |
| Outcome | Tutors equipped with general and fundamental learning facilitation skills | Tutors equipped with facilitative skills specifically tailored for their faculty's context |

**Table 1:** Characteristics of the A_STEP training model.

1 TLC: An individual in a faculty that coordinates and ensures the effective functioning of the tutor programme.

## Reflection on the Training Sessions

One of the key responsibilities of A_STEP tutors is to compile a reflective journal aimed at capturing their experiences of being learning facilitators in the Faculty.

A section of the journal specifically focusses on identifying tutors' perceptions of the A_STEP training sessions that were held in 2015. Qualitative data were collected from 17 reflective journal entries at the start of the second semester and coded into categories and themes using the data analysis software package, NVivo.

Figure 1 summarizes the themes and categories which emerged from this analysis. *Verbatim* excerpts, illustrating these themes, are also portrayed.

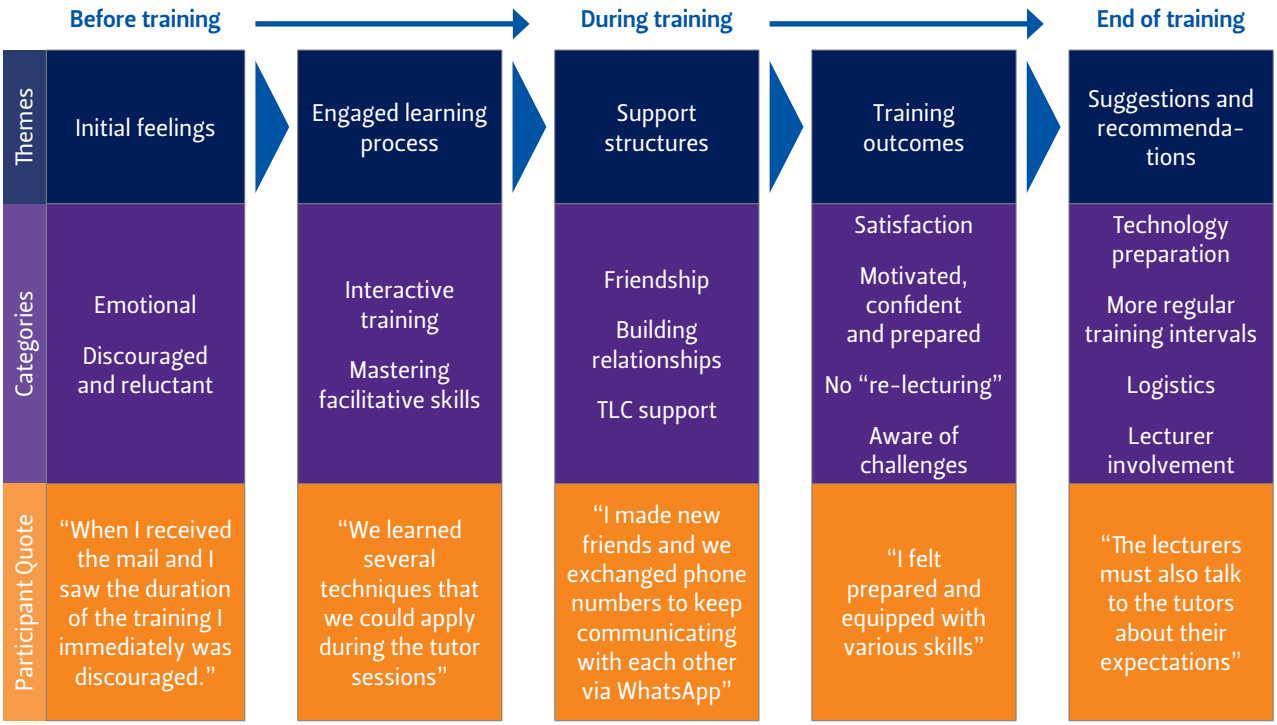
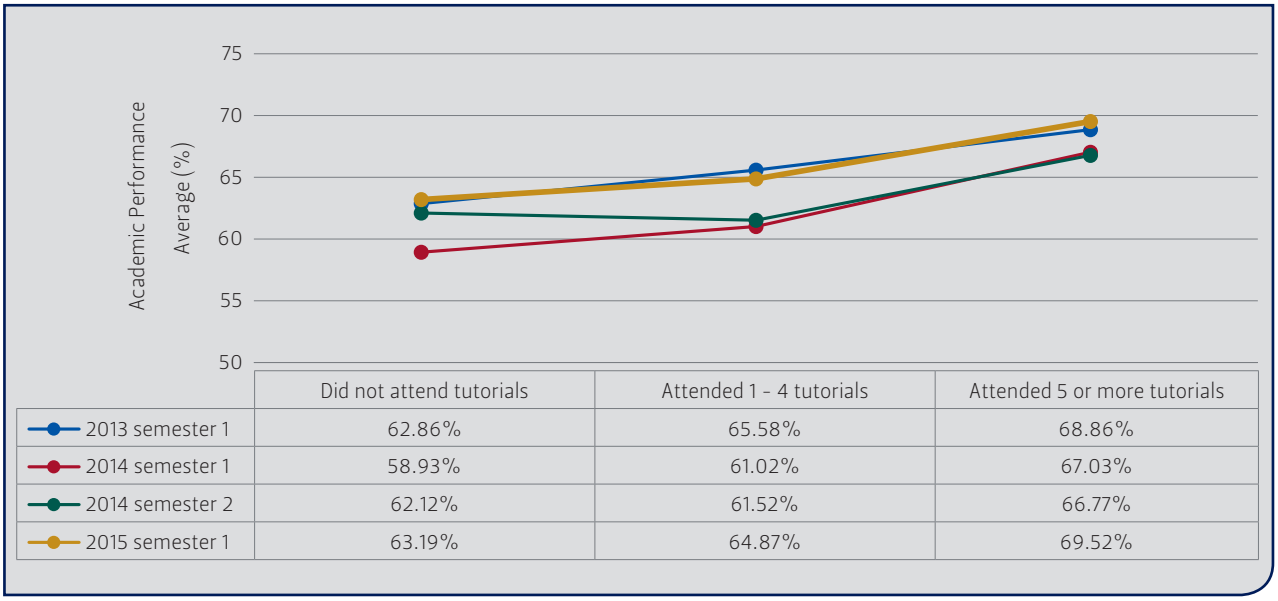



**Figure 1:** Illustrating tutors' perception of training.

## A_STEP Impact on Academic Performances

Figure 2 provides an overview on how the A_STEP has affected tutees' academic performance in the FoE. The results were obtained through correlating tutee attendance with their academic performance in their respective tutor modules between 2013 and 2015.




| | Did not attend tutorials | Attended 1 - 4 tutorials | Attended 5 or more tutorials |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2013 semester 1 | 62.86% | 65.58% | 68.86% |
| 2014 semester 1 | 58.93% | 61.02% | 67.03% |
| 2014 semester 2 | 62.12% | 61.52% | 66.77% |
| 2015 semester 1 | 63.19% | 64.87% | 69.52% |

**Figure 2:** The influence of the A_STEP on tutees' academic performance.

The data portrayed in Figure 2 indicates that there is a relationship between attending tutorial classes and students' academic performance.

## Tutee Attendance Rates

The A_STEP provides tutorials to students on a non-compulsory basis (A_STEP tutor manual, 2014). An analysis of tutee attendance and modules forming part of the A_STEP was done for the period 2013 to 2015. The data portrayed in figures 3 and 4 were derived from the Oracle[2] platform.

From the given data, it is evident that students have been showing a significant interest in attending tutorials during the past two years. Figure 3 illustrates that the number of tutees attending tutorials increased by 442.14% between 2013 and 2015. Figure 4 highlights a growth of 96.29% in modules forming part of the A_STEP between 2013 and 2015.

## Tutee Perception of the A_STEP

Open-ended questionnaire surveys were, at random intervals during the first semester of 2015, administered to tutees to gain insight into their perceptions of the A_STEP. Table 2 provides a summary of themes, categories and exemplary quotations that emerged from a total of 67 responses.

2 Oracle: A platform used to automate, manage and track enrollment trends and student information.

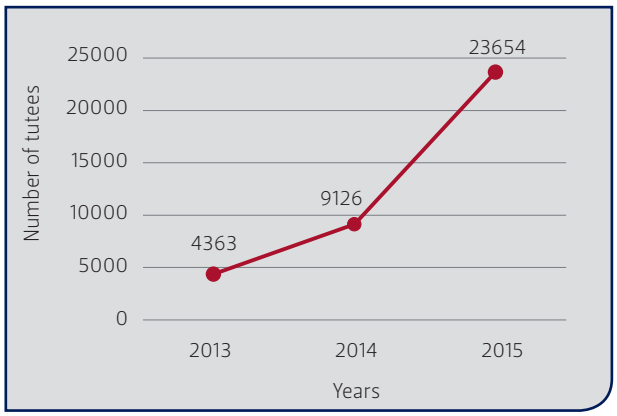



**Figure 3:** Tutee attendance figures 2013 – 2015.

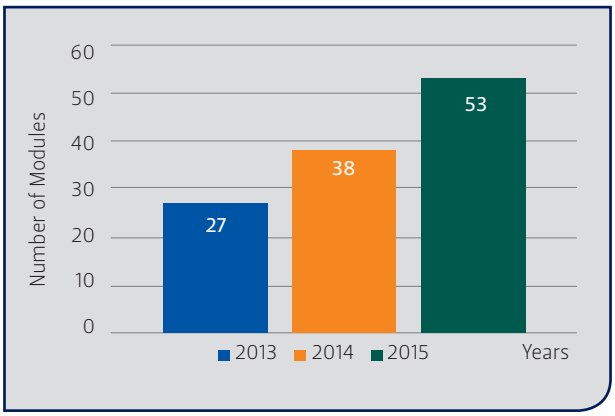



**Figure 4:** Number of modules making use of tutors.

| Themes | Demonstration of facilitative qualities by tutors | | | | | | Areas to be improved | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Categories | Knowledge on modular content | Individual attention | Learning motivator | Feedback | Teaching approach | Technology use | Lack of technology use | Tutor & lecturer communi-cation | Logistics | Lack of learning stimulation |
| Direct quotes | "she made the work easier and explained the work in other ways" | "attended all individual problems" | "tutor encourages me to learn" | "Helped by giving answers at the end" | "encourages group work" | "powerpoint has helped a great deal to better understand resources" | "make use of more slides" | "make sure tutor is on the same level as lecturer" | "could not attend because of a timetable clashes" | "should make activities more fun" |

**Table 2:** Tutees' perceptions of the A_STEP.

## Challenges Experienced

Improvement of the programme requires an analysis of the current challenges experienced by tutors employed in the Faculty. Qualitative data were once again obtained from tutors' reflective journal entries and the same methodology as recorded in par. 6 applied. Figure 5 represents a summary of themes and categories that emerged from this inquiry, as well as direct, illustrative quotes condensed from the feedback.

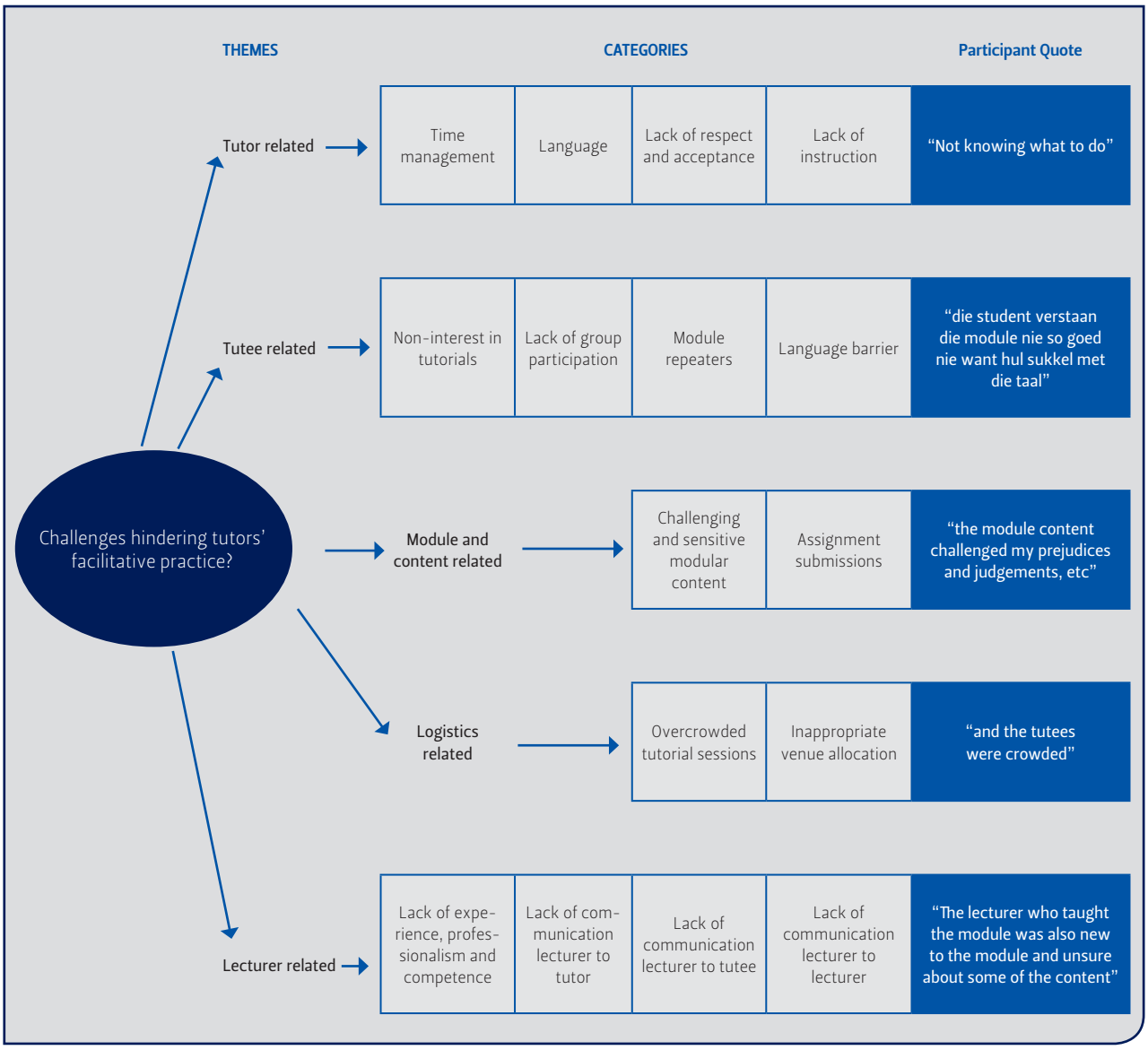



**Figure 5:** Challenges hindering tutors' facilitative practices.

## The Way Forward

The data in this impact report provides evidence that the A_STEP is growing at a substantial rate in the Faculty of Education. The increase in both tutorial attendance and tutor modules is a result of both lecturers and students showing interest in the programme as a student learning support measure. Certain strategies should however be considered to ensure that the growth of the programme does not stifle the quality or purpose thereof in the Faculty. Measures to be considered in the near future will include more regular TLC observations, peer observations among tutors and the use of tutor-mentors to assist novice tutors with the planning of their sessions. The TLC should also attempt to address the challenges posed by the tutors and consider the suggestions and recommendations made by the tutees.

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# The Academic Facilitation Sessions (AFS) programme in the Faculty of Humanities

Jackie Storer

In 2009, the Faculty of Humanities adopted a facilitative approach to learning in their academic support programme. The programme was aimed at the students who entered the Faculty via either the extended programmes or the university preparation programme (UPP). All of the programmes are set up to provide access to students who do not meet the minimum admission requirement of the Faculty. The programmes allow students to study two years to complete their first academic year of university. In addition, students attend language competency modules, a lifelong learning module and a basic mathematics module. Students may not proceed to a second academic year until these development modules are completed.

Given the large numbers of first-year students, traditional lecturing persists as the predominant teaching and learning approach in most departments. The UPP, however, has always facilitated groups of no larger than fifty students per facilitator and has adopted a more resource based learning approach (Bitzer & Pretorius, 1996). Results from the UPP are encouraging and consequently a similar approach to academic support was adopted in the design of the academic support structures of the Faculty.

The Academic Facilitation Sessions (AFS), as the programme is known, has a particular educational philosophy that guides the teaching and learning in the programme. This philosophy draws on the theories of experiential learning, social constructivism and cooperative learning (Naude, 2014). All of these theories, as well as the resource based learning theory used in the UPP assume a facilitative approach to teaching and learning. Facilitation as a teaching and learning methodology is therefore a corner stone of the programme. The AFS retains a peer-instruction structure and facilitators are drawn from the post-graduate student body.

Small interactive sessions of no more than 25 students, provide students with an opportunity to explore the disciplinary content using the generic competencies provided in their development modules. Facilitators are guided by student centred principles. These focus activity in the sessions on creating learning contexts that allow a student to construct meaning through the application and integration of information to specific learning experiences developed by the facilitator (Naude, 2014).

From the beginning an action research, mixed methods, dimension was incorporated into the design and management of the programme. This research culminated in a Research Report covering the period of 2009 – 2013.

Research findings confirm that students experience the programme as adding value to their academic lives. To this end, the programme "succeeds in its aim to provide humanistic and student centred learning environments" (Naude, 2014).

Research suggests that students who attended AFS sessions tend to perform well, although the complexity of what contributes to academic success precludes us from claiming that AFS is a specific cause of this performance. Result comparisons between extended and mainstream students show that over the period of 2009 – 2013 the pass rate has increased year by year to the point that extended programme students are now achieving similar pass rates to that of the mainstream students in all modules where the AFS is active. Again, we cannot claim that the AFS is the only cause for this improvement, but these results are encouraging (Naude, 2014).

The management of the programme has been re-organised in 2015 although the philosophy and the methodological principles that have created the initial success of this programme have been retained.

Student Engagement (Kuh, 2011), a model of student interventions that focus on what the Faculty can do to encourage students to place their attention and spend time on those activities that are known to contribute to academic success, has been incorporated in to the programme (Strydom, Basson, & Mentz, 2010).

Focus has been placed on the development of the facilitators. Facilitation is a challenging educational methodology and facilitators are still young and inexperienced. Their support is at the heart of making the whole system function. Formalising the training of facilitators is a work in progress but this would allow the facilitator role to become a pipeline for junior staff in the faculty.

As a concept, the Academic Facilitation Sessions hold the promise of bringing student centred teaching and learning to students overwhelmed by large classes, new contexts and, often, challenging socio-economic environments. The programme still needs work to build in flexibility for those students who do not require the same level of support (CHE, 2013) and to construct a student tracking system that allows for the identification and added encouragement of at risk students early in each year (van Schalkwyk, Young, Ruiters, & Farmer, 2012). The Faculty Office has introduced an academic advising structure and the cooperation between the AFS and this structure is developing to bring about the best possible support for vulnerable students (Hunter, 2011). Research that explores how this programme adds value to students' lives will continue and the AFS will continue to evolve and adapt to the ever changing contexts of Teaching and Learning at the University of the Free State and in South Africa.

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# Unpacking tutorial session attendance: Appreciating tutees perspectives

Frederick Mudavanhu and Peter Mosikili

At the University of the Free State, QwaQwa Campus, the implementation of the Academic Student Tutorial Excellence Programme (A_STEP) tutor programme has had a relatively low rate of attendance of tutorial sessions. This prompted an investigation into the low attendance phenomena.

The aim of this study was to explore and address the contributing elements to poor tutorial session attendance based on the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences students' perspectives. The study followed a qualitative approach, appreciative enquiry, in which semi-structured interviews were conducted.

A purposive sample of five groups from five science courses consisting of 10 tutees each, formed the data source. A set of questions, structured according to the Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results (SOAR) framework, were posed to the target group during the interviews.

The research findings identified several contributing factors that were causing poor tutorial session attendance.

Within the SOAR framework, the participants provided possible solutions to the tutorial attendance dilemma (see Table 1). They suggested a clash free and stable timetable, well prepared tutors, early tutorial sessions, fortnightly sessions, off campus sessions, better tutor monitoring systems. It was noteworthy, that the participants shied away from advocating for compulsory tutorial sessions. This study's results enabled the tutorial administration team to think strategically about enhancing tutorial attendance and thus made recommendations in the form of an Attendance of Tutorial Improvement Plan (A_TIP).

The results of this study can be used to assist tertiary institutions and student learning support practitioners in making decisions about strategic approaches towards tutorial programme delivery.

| Contributing factors causing poor tutorial attendance | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Course credit overload | Underprepared tutors | Tutorial clashes | Residence distance from university | Non-mandatory nature of tutorial sessions |
| Perceptions towards tutorial sessions | Timetable clashes | Learner fatigue | Tutor absence | Timetable instability |

**Table 1:** Research findings suggesting factors that contribute to poor tutorial session attendance. ■

# Improving students' academic advising experience during registration

Evodia Motsokobi

## Introduction

Academic advising is viewed as a way to connect students to the campus and help them feel that someone is looking out for them (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt and Associates, 2010:214). The University of the Free State (UFS) views academic advising as a developmental process which assists students in the clarification of their life/career goals and in the development of educational plans for the realisation of these goals.

Academic advising at the UFS follows a learning-centred approach that fosters an advising relationship amongst students, staff and other institutional stakeholders. The CTL conducted monitoring and evaluation research as part of an ongoing process to enhance the quality of student academic support at the UFS. The aims of the research included outlining the students' academic advising experience during the 2015 registration and identifying the strengths and possible developmental areas of academic advising during registration.

## Data collection

An electronic survey was compiled by the CTL to measure and better understand students' experience of academic advising, which took place during the annual registration process of 2015. A total of 1 078 students completed the survey of which 378 respondents (35.2%) were first years and 696 respondents (64.8%) were senior students. The survey consisted of quantitative as well as qualitative questions.

## Discussion of results

Students were asked various questions regarding academic advice. The following results provide an overview of the students' responses. Students were asked if they received academic advice during the 2015 registration process on-campus. The students' responses indicate that the majority of students report receiving academic advising during the 2015 registration period (68%). However, there were still a considerable amount of students (27%) who did not receive academic advice. This may be attributed to the fact that senior students could register online while they were situated off-campus. Most students who did not receive academic advice during registration did however agree that they would like to receive academic advice with regards to their academic careers (55%).

Students were asked to describe their personal academic advising experience during the 2015 registration. Figure 1 provides an overview of student responses in this regard.

The overwhelming majority of students (91%) reported their academic advising experience during the 2015 registration period as "Excellent" or "Good". Only 9% of students indicated that they had a "Bad" or "Very bad" experience. The majority of the students from the faculties of Theology and Health Sciences experienced academic advising as "Excellent".

An item was included in the survey in order to compare academic advising rendered during 2014 registration with academic advising rendered in 2015. Table 1 provides an overview of student responses:

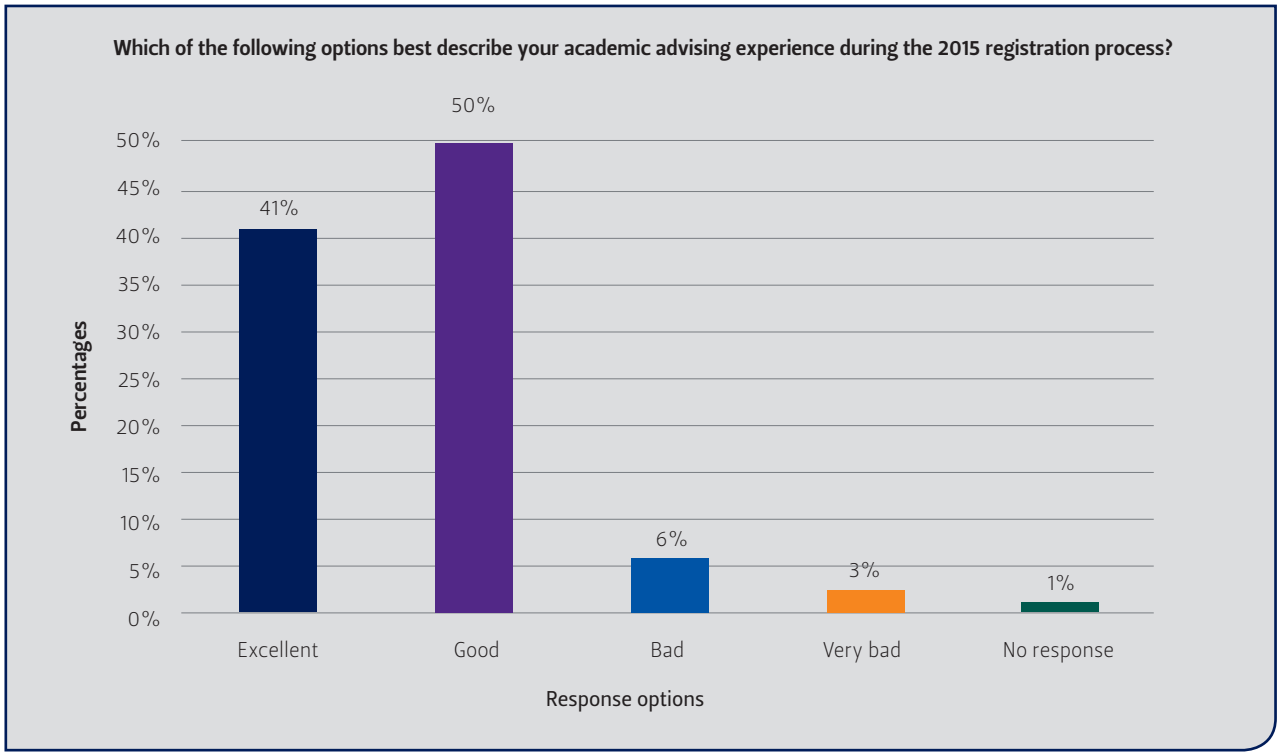


**Figure 1:** Students' responses when asked to report their academic advising experience during the 2015 registration process.

| How did this year's academic advice compare to last year's academic advising? | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Response option** | **Total number of responses** | **Percentage** |
| Better | 289 | 40% |
| The same | 147 | 20% |
| Worse | 40 | 6% |
| I did not receive academic advice in 2014 | 247 | 34% |
| No response | 7 | 1% |

**Table 1:** Students' responses when asked how academic advising in 2015 compared to 2014's academic advising.

Results indicate that most of the students (40%) reported that their academic advising improved form the previous year. Very few students (6%) reported that the academic advice was worse than the previous year.

When asked if advisors helped students to find solutions to registration challenges, the majority of students (83%) responded, "Yes". While only 17% of students disagreed with this statement by responding, "No". Most students (81%) also reported that their academic advisors had explained what their course requirements were. However, there is a small percentage of the students (18%) who indicated that their course requirements were not explained.

The majority of the respondents indicated that they would recommend the advisor who helped them (Table 2). These results indicate that most students felt positive about their specific academic advisors.

| Would you recommend the advisor who helped you during the 2015 registration to other students? | | |
|---|---|---|
| Response option | Total number of responses | Percentage |
| Yes | 637 | 87% |
| No | 86 | 12% |
| No response | 7 | 1% |

Table 2: Students' responses when asked if they would recommend the academic advisor who helped them during the 2015 registration.

## Recommendations

These recommendations include that faculty staff should be trained more intensively in terms of relational skills such as active listening. It is further recommended that faculty staff training include a better explanation of the fundamentals of academic advising and the practical application thereof. Another recommendation is that faculty staff should be made aware of the importance of linking general career advice to specific academic programmes and engaging students in long-term goal-setting. Thus, implementing the above-mentioned recommendations should enhance the student academic advising experience during registration.

The majority of respondents indicated that advisors were willing to help them and that they were friendly and approachable. Students also felt that their advisors were knowledgeable enough to efficiently assist them. Another interesting finding was that the majority of the students who received academic advice indicated that their advisor did more than what was expected by providing additional advice about their academic choices.

However, certain areas of possible growth were identified after careful analysis of the data. The results suggest that academic advising should be more intentional. Nonetheless, the results indicate that the majority of students felt supported by academic advisors during the 2015 registration process and appreciated the academic advising initiative at the UFS.

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# BUILDING ORGANISATION FOR CHANGE AND TEACHING LEADERSHIP

# Academic Leadership Programme: Promoting leadership sustainability

Tamika Otto and Dr Leon Bezuidenhoud

## Background

The development of an Academic Leadership Programme (ALP) for the University of the Free State (UFS) was derived from comprehensive research with critical awareness of international and local advancements in the higher educational sphere. It was established that effective change leadership in an institution is best implemented by internal stakeholders that use a combination of interpersonal and hard skills (Gmelch & Buller, 2015). In order for these skills to form part of the culture of the Head of Department (HOD), it is imperative that the skills be practiced in an environment that allows for trial and error. Only by understanding the role and needs of the academic leader can UFS begin to build a supportive and sustainable environment.

## Challenges HODs Face

Within the context of UFS, Table 1 provides an overview of some of the current expectations of a HOD.

| Expectations of a HOD |
|---|
| Ability to generate external resources for innovation and sustainability |
| Administrative efficiency |
| Bring together and build a solid team |
| Capacity to conduct regular reviews for self-improvement |
| Continuous increased quality |
| Create an identity for the department |
| Mobilising positive change |
| Recruit a diverse world class team |
| Solve complex problems |
| The transformation of knowledge |
| Value of research output |

**Table 1:** Expectations of a HOD.

## Rationale for the Academic Leadership Programme

In addition to the institution's expectations of a HOD, the UFS is faced with an immense task of replacing its HOD staff. According to a document compiled by the Human Resource Department of UFS in 2014, the contracts of 35.9% of HODs will expire within the next five years.

This necessitates the need to cultivate candidates to harbour the correct competencies in order to support the institution at HOD level. Dr Allyn Shaw, a Higher Education Leadership expert at Michigan State University, collected qualitative data from a Leadership in Higher Education seminar (2014) at UFS that indicated HODs experience little formalised support in terms of leadership development.

There are several leadership development programmes in South Africa on offer in the Higher Education sphere. For the ALP at the UFS, the 7-S model, a well-established corporate leadership model that was adapted by Gmelch & Buller (2015) for the development of academic leadership capacity in higher education, has been applied (see Figure 2).

By using a combination of hard- and soft skills, the programme aims to create a cyclical and reciprocal process to align the core functions of the UFS to academic sustainability.

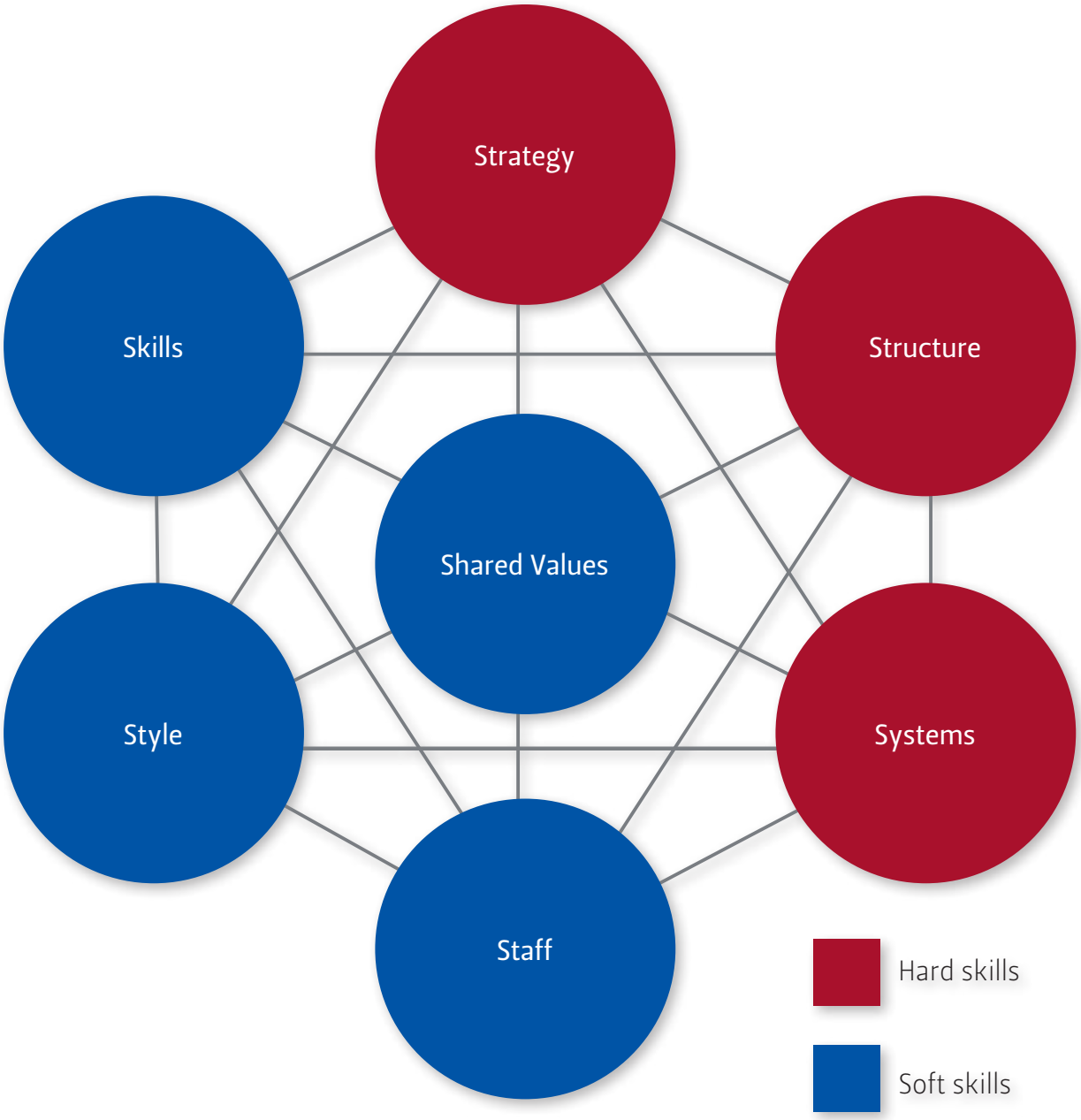


**Figure 2:** Model for building academic leadership capacity (Gmelch & Buller, 2015).

In addition, this programme will continuously align itself with the UFS Strategic Plans in an effort to promote academic sustainability.

The ALP aims to establish a systematic process through which Deans identify talented employees, and assess and develop them to ensure they are ready to assume key roles within the University. This programme will allow existing HODs to be accommodated also.

A variety of activities were selected to implement the theoretical model practically. Table 2 provides a graphic illustration of alignment between the 7-S model and the ALP activities.

| Performance areas | Academic Leadership Activities | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Needs assessment | Pre-orientation | Orientation | Tavistock | Challenging experiences | Learning communities | Grow your career | Arbinger | Mentoring | Coaching | Self-reflection journal |
| **Knowledge transformation**<br>■ Curricular review; teaching and learning; a research intensive university. | X | X | X | | | X | X | | | | |
| **Knowledge of institutional culture and of the "other"**<br>■ Development of a culture of intellectual debate and excellence with high staff participation; Growing demographic and intellectual diversity; Contribution to the development of students' agency and engagement in the academic sphere; Purposeful management of external stakeholders. | | | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| **Knowledge of transformation**<br>■ The ability to incorporate faculty and institutional data and institutional research into the process of management and decision making at faculty level. | | | X | X | X | X | | X | X | X | X |
| **Academic management and administration**<br>■ Sound and timeous oversight of the implementation of faculty and general academic rules | | | X | | | X | | | X | X | X |
| **Financial management**<br>■ Sound and strategic management of the faculty finances in line with the strategic goals of the UFS | | | X | | | X | | | X | X | X |
| **Alignment with the core functions of UFS**<br>■ Teaching and Learning, Research and Community Engagement and Service Learning | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

**Table 2:** Model for building academic leadership capacity.

## Benefits

The ALP will equip academic leaders to:

- Confront leadership challenges and assist faculty leadership by increasing student numbers with different levels of preparedness;
- Expose the HOD to a wide range of national policies; blur of disciplinary boundaries; prepare 'under-prepared' academic staff (Quinn, 2012);
- Conduct research on what skills faculty leadership need to develop and how to best facilitate this development;
- Make use of the opportunity to identify and explore current issues related to higher education, academic leadership and management;
- Raise awareness of the need for a talent pipeline and succession plan;
- Integrate the 'business side of the UFS' and 'human strategies';
- Mobilise faculty leadership to fulfil the UFS's mission and vision; provide the necessary support to academic leaders to cope with their new reality, responsibilities and accountabilities.

## Conclusion

Broadly speaking leadership development, especially at faculty level, is of increasing importance in higher education. CTL, in close collaboration with the Human Resource Department, will implement this programme at the UFS in 2016 with an initial pilot group of 20 HODs. It is recommended that this model be applied over a two year period. The ALP will establish a systematic process through which staff will develop their skills to ensure they are equipped for the significant role as a HOD to build an organisation for change and teaching leadership.

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# Arbinger: Exploring a different solution to institutional culture

Evodia Motsokobi and Dr Leon Bezuidenhoud

One of the key challenges in improving the quality of leadership, teaching and learning and the culture in a department or centre is to get staff to reflect critically on themselves and their responsibilities. Conflict and unhealthy working environments are often the result of "self deception".

## *"(Arbinger) changed my managerial style positively"*

In the 1970s, a team of scholars embarked on an exploration into a core problem at the heart of the human sciences—the "problem of self-deception." The research explored how we end up creating and sustaining problems we don't know we are causing, and how and why people resist helpful solutions. Initially, all attempts to understand the phenomenon of self-deception failed, just as all attempts had for over 100 years. After years of work, however, the research team discovered a solution no one expected.

They discovered the clear and surprising way that people begin to evade responsibility without thinking that they are doing so, and therefore end up blaming others or circumstances they themselves are helping to create. More importantly, they discovered how this could be corrected.

Within this understanding and as a result of the global impact of Arbinger's international bestsellers, *Leadership and Self-Deception (2002)* and *The Anatomy of Peace* (2015), and Arbinger Training and Consulting's long track record with clients, the Centre for Teaching and Learning has found the Arbinger framework to be effective in the context of the UFS.

It therefore has invested in the training of two internal employees to receive accredited training in facilitating the *Arbinger Core at Work*. The aim was to develop the capacity within the UFS to better support departments and support services in developing healthy and productive work environments. This Arbinger approach is facilitated through three modules.

## *"Arbinger is needed so that every employee can access their relationships... to have a healthy working environment"*

The first module awakens a deep, emotional understanding in participants that they help to create the very problems they complain about and blame on others. This leads participants to the powerful realisation that they are responsible not only for those problems and the negative emotions they spawn, but also for finding the solutions to those problems. The module thus helps participants develop a mentality of responsibility instead of blame in their work. Because self-deception is the problem of not knowing and resisting the possibility that one actually has a problem, making people aware that they suffer from it can create tremendous resistance. This is not a trivial task. The initial Arbinger module has been designed to pierce this veil of denial and resistance. The backbone of this programme is the facilitator's use of a series of personal stories. The way that these stories are told and built upon each other allows participants to emotionally relate to them and draw on their own individual experiences. Participants are thus exposed to the ideas in a non-threatening manner, and draw the inevitable conclusion that they do suffer from self-deception and that this problem is seriously undermining their personal satisfaction and professional performance. The result is that participants not only recognise the problem, but develop a deep desire to overcome it. Building on that desire, participants learn how to deal with self-deception.

## "I wish I could have a follow-up session every 12 months... It was great."

In the second and third modules of the programme, participants learn how to think about their work in a way that mitigates the impact of self-deception in the workplace, improves personal accountability and generates better results. So-called "problem" members in a group are often the most profoundly affected because the Arbinger ideas allow them to see themselves and understand their impact on others in a totally different light. Module two provides participants with a framework and tools that will allow them to continuously evaluate and improve the extent to which they are working collaboratively and meeting the needs of their customers, colleagues, directors and managers/leaders. Similarly, module three teaches participants how to conceive their work in a way that allows them to leverage the insights they gained in the first two modules to improve their ability to affect positive change in their respective work environments and with their clients.

The module provides participants with a framework and tools that will allow them to:

1) Continuously evaluate whether they are optimally exercising influence,

2) Improve their ability to effect positive change, and

3) Use their influence to resolve the workplace conflicts in which they are involved.

Equipped with the understanding of self-deception and these frameworks, participants now have a foundation that allows them to work in a far more collaborative manner and helps them to focus on achieving results that are important to them and the University of the Free State. The result is that the participants are positioned to achieve better business results and substantial and sustainable improvements in key areas such as leadership development, team effectiveness, change management, customer service and conflict resolution.

Within the Centre for Teaching and Learning, the majority of existing employees on both campuses have been exposed to the Arbinger approach. Due to the effectiveness of this approach, the Arbinger concept was facilitated at an academic department, with two other academic departments at the UFS expressing an interest in being introduced to the framework.

The introduction of a shared language has allowed employees within the Centre of Teaching and Learning to work more collaboratively across boundaries and this has positively affected the organisational culture within the Centre for Teaching and Learning. And although organisational culture is often viewed as being separate from an organisation's real work within the Centre of Teaching and Learning, we believe that it is most accurate to think of organisational culture as the way in which an organisation's real work gets accomplished. More specifically, we view organisational culture as a description of the way in which employees conceive of and execute their work. The Arbinger framework has allowed employees and management within the Centre for Teaching and Learning to explore how problematic organisational cultures develop. In addition, it creates an opportunity to discover how we contribute to that culture, and how to leverage Arbinger's ground-breaking work to transform the organisational culture at the Centre for Teaching and Learning to ensure that people work in a more collaborative, responsible, and results-focused way. ■

**Figure 1:** CTL staff attending the Arbinger training in October 2015, led by Dr Leon Bezuidenhoud.

# ALIGNING INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES TO FOSTER QUALITY TEACHING

# The digital identity of UFS students

Tiana van der Merwe

Although technology has a disruptive effect on the world today, it does offer powerful way in which to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, the CTL conducts digital identity research on a bi-annual basis.

The digital identity study explores technology ownership, use patterns, and perceptions of technology among students. The questionnaire is based on the ECAR[1] study of undergraduate students and technology, (integrating questions from the 2013 – 2015 study), and has been adapted for the South African context by the UFS.

The research objectives of the study at the UFS are outlined in Table 1.

| Research objectives of the digital identity survey relating to UFS students | |
|---|---|
| 1. | To explore the profile of UFS students' ownership and use of technology in teaching and learning. |
| 2. | To assess students' perceptions of how well institutions and academic staff use technology to enhance the academic experience |
| 3. | To assess students perceptions regarding institutional infrastructure related to the use of technology in teaching and learning (internet/Wi-Fi access; UFS computer labs and Passwords and Security)[2] |
| 4. | To benchmark student behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions about bringing their own devices to campus |
| 5. | To identify the ways in which students' report that technology helps them achieve their academic outcomes (including the use of the institutional Learning Management System) |
| 6. | To explore student behaviours, attitudes, and perceptions about blended and online learning |
| 7. | To assess students' perceptions around the use of data analytics, notifications and portfolios[3] |
| 8. | To identify student training and support aspects related to the use of technology in teaching and learning |
| 9. | To identify longitudinal trends in student technology ownership and use of technology in teaching and learning (2013 vs. 2015) |

**Table 1:** Research objectives of the digital identity survey (UFS students).

1 Past work from ECAR is publicly available through the EDUCAUSE website: www.educause.edu/student-study.

2 Not included in the 2013 Digital Identity Study, but included in collaboration with ICT services

3 Not included in the 2013 Digital Identity Study

The questionnaire was launched between April and July 2015 with undergraduate students from all three UFS campuses taking part in the study. Of the 2 210 respondents, 42% were first-year students, representative of all seven faculties, while 57% of the respondents were undergraduate students. Figure 1 provides an overview of the demographic profile of the respondents.

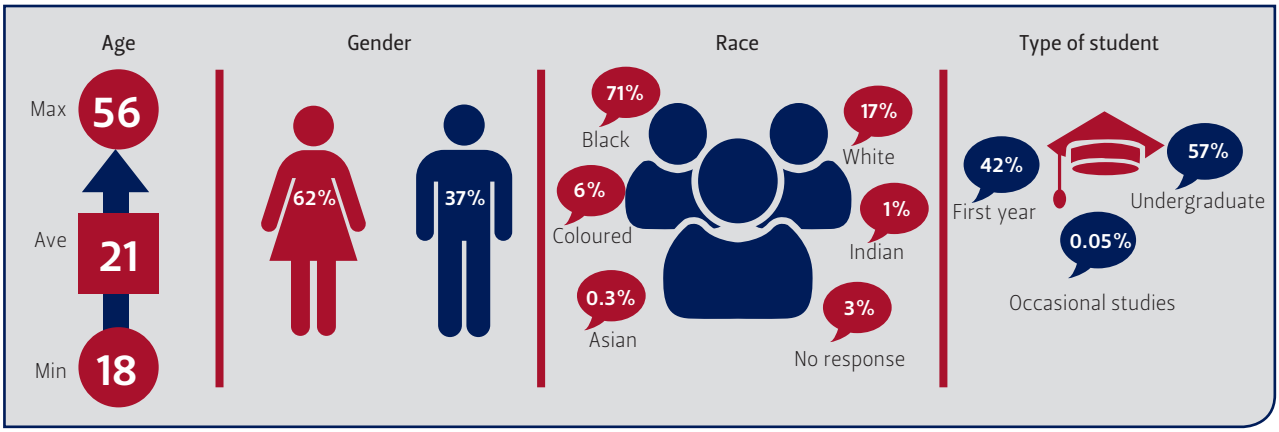



**Figure 1:** Demographic profile of student respondents (n=2 210).

One of the first questions academics and other role players ask when start off with technology in teaching and learning is, "what devices does students have to access learning materials and activities?" This article will gives a glimpse of the device ownership of students, with a more detailed discussion on this, and various other technology behaviours, attitudes and perceptions in the full digital identity report.

In terms of device ownership, students own on average two technology devices, ranging from desktops, laptops, tablets/iPads and Smartphones.

Figure 2 gives an overview of student device ownership in terms of devices that students own, or plan to purchase within the next 12 months, as well as the perceived importance of devices in academic success.

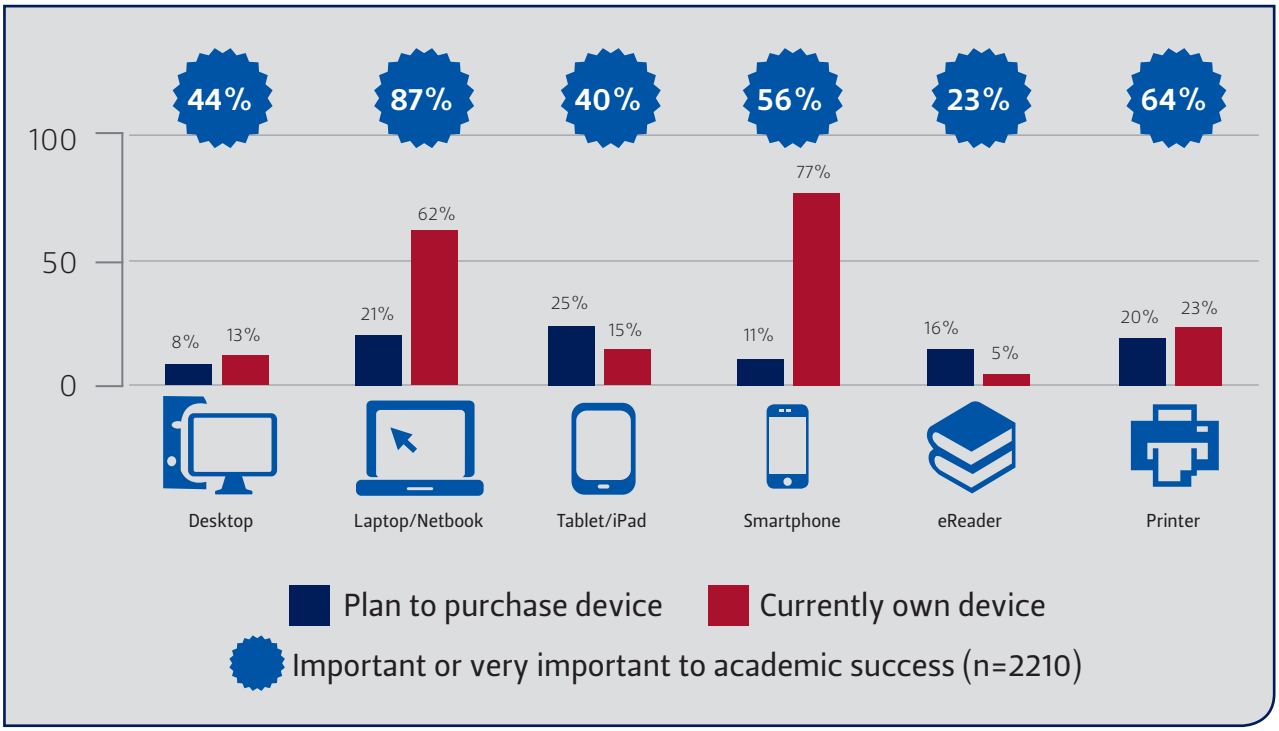



**Figure 2:** Student device ownership and perceived importance of devices in academic success.

Although smartphones are the most common technology device among students (77%), only 56% of students see this mobile device as important or very important to their academic success. An important element of the use of the devices in teaching and learning are the costs thereof to students. Smartphones are mainly

used on prepaid accounts (66% of students fund their airtime themselves), with only 37% of students being on "Top-up" or other contract accounts.

Based on the prevalence of smartphones among students, the question is how academics and students can be empowered to use mobile devices as effective teaching and learning tools in a cost effective way.

Laptops/netbooks are owned by 62% of students, with 87% of these respondents indicating that this device is "Important" or "Very important" to their academic success. In contrast to the importance of laptops/netbooks to student success, only 47% of students bring their laptops/netbooks to campus. Students listed multiple reasons for not bringing these laptops to campus (outlined in Table 2).

| Reason | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Scared of theft or damage | 48% |
| Inconvenient to carry around on campus | 51% |
| Academics not using in classroom teaching | 51% |
| Workspace unavailable | 6% |
| No power sources to charge devices | 20% |
| Problems accessing the Internet | 19% |

**Table 2:** Reasons for not bringing laptops to campus.

From the abovementioned reasons listed for not bringing laptops to campus, it is clear the UFS will have to think about the physical infrastructure needed in an era of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), but also think about ways to integrate these devices in a meaningful way into classroom teaching and learning initiatives. In an attempt to find answers to these questions, the UFS in collaboration with UCT will embark on research project in 2016 and 2017 on the use of Personal Mobile Devices in Teaching and Learning (funded by the DHET). This project will focus on identifying infrastructure needs on campuses, as well as academic staff and student support and training needed to use laptops as effective teaching and learning tools.

Looking at the device ownership in Figure 2, it is interesting to see that although only 23% of students own a printer, 64% of students see that printers are an important or very important tool in their academic success. From this finding it can be deducted that the role of printed materials and resources is still very important to students in terms of their academic success. This raises questions of how students learn in digital era.

Closely related to device ownership is the issue of Internet access. On-campus students feel fairly satisfied with the UFS wireless network with around 50% noting it to be reliable, easy to login and having good performance (For example: network speed and bandwidth). Off-campus, only 25% of students have reliable access to Internet, which they predominantly access with 3G or open-access Wifi. This means that 71% of respondents that took part in the study were off-campus students that do not stay in residences.

From the abovementioned overview of student technology ownership, it is clear that the UFS needs to start thinking on a strategic level about how to provide infrastructure and support to students that bring devices to campus, but also how to structure and support learning when they leave campus. Academics and students need to start conversing about how to effectively use these devices in teaching and learning experiences, with the Centre of Teaching and Learning providing support where necessary.

This article is based on a small section of the digital identity study of UFS students. Please email Bernice Oss: OssBG@ufs.ac.za for a copy of the full report for more information on:

- Students' use and perceptions of UFS computer labs;
- The use of personal devices and emerging technologies in teaching and learning;
- Students' behaviour, perceptions and experiences towards learning environments;
- Students preferences and evaluation of technology in teaching and learning at the UFS (including the Learning Management System); and
- Students' perceptions on technology skills and training needs. ■

# The extended LLB programme: A quest for transformation and academic success

Dr Manie Moolman and Leani van Niekerk

## Introduction

The democratisation of South Africa in 1994 gave rise to the desire to transform the legal professions and legal education. Debates on this issue commenced in 1995 and were driven by aspirations to widen access and improve racial diversity in the professions, reduce the cost of qualifying as a lawyer, and address the perceived difference in the quality of the different law degrees. In 1998, the post-graduate LLB degree providing admission to both the attorneys' and advocates' professions in South Africa was changed from a post-graduate, five-year study programme (a three-year undergraduate B Iuris and 2-year LLB, or four-year undergraduate B Proc and a one-year LLB) to an undergraduate, four-year study programme.

The rigorous admission requirements for the mainstream LLB programme in combination with specific numeracy and literacy requirements, contributed to the problem that many students were not able to gain admission to the LLB programme. The need thus arose to arrange alternative routes for admission to professional law studies. The UFS introduced an extended five-year LLB in 2005 to allow students with a lower admission score to study law. More than a hundred five-year LLB students from previously disadvantaged groups have graduated since 2009 with such an LLB.

The extended programme was designed as an adaption of the four-year programme and spreads the first year modules of the four-year programme over two years. The first year of the extended programme also includes various developmental modules, namely an academic language course in English or Afrikaans, Computer Literacy and Computer Usage, Skills and Competencies in Lifelong Learning, and Mathematical Literacy. Only three of the extended programme's first year modules are law modules, namely Introduction to Law, Historical Foundations of South African Law and Roman Law. In the second year of study, only the Legal Skills module is presented in addition to the four year programme's modules. From their third to fifth years of studies, extended LLB students continue with the second to fourth year curriculum for mainstream LLB students.

## Impact of the Five-year LLB on Students' Academic Success

A study was undertaken at the beginning of 2015 to determine the impact of the five-year LLB students' success rates when compared to the success rates of four-year LLB students. Data was resourced from institutional systems by the UFS ICT Services in two separate groups, according to the students' programme registration in terms of programme code 3302 (four-year LLB) and programme code 3303 (five-year LLB). The success rate per module was calculated by expressing the number of students who passed a module as a percentage of the total number of students who enrolled for a module in 2014. The success rates of four-year LLB students and five-year LLB students were compared. The table below reflects the success/pass rates per module of students registered for programme codes 3302 and 3303 and also indicates the difference between the success rates of the two groups of students per module.

| Module code | Module name | Success rates | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 3302 (Four-year LLB) | 3303 (Five-year LLB) | Difference |
| ARR214 | Labour Law | 68% | 68% | 0% |
| ARR224 | Labour Law | 81% | 77% | 4% |
| BIR324 | Instruments of Payment | 70% | 55% | 15% |
| BLR314 | Tax Law | 87% | 95% | -8%* |
| BWR224 | Law of Evidence | 84% | 86% | -2%* |
| CPR414 | Capita Selecta from Private Law | 68% | 68% | 0% |
| DEL314 | Law of Delict | 83% | 86% | -3%* |
| ERF224 | Law of Succession and Administration of Estates | 79% | 60% | 19% |
| FAM124 | Family Law | 62% | 60% | 2% |
| HRO314 | Mercantile Law Contracts, Consumer and Insurance Law | 85% | 85% | 0% |
| ILR124 | Introduction to Legal Science | 75% | 76% | -1%* |
| INR424 | International Law | 75% | 74% | 1% |
| KON214 | Law of Contract | 62% | 50% | 12% |
| LIR424 | Law of Insolvency and Liquidation | 84% | 83% | 1% |
| MMF424 | Law of Third Party Compensation | 76% | 65% | 11% |
| ONR314 | Law of Business Enterprises | 89% | 92% | -3%* |
| ONR324 | Law of Business Enterprises | 85% | 88% | -3%* |
| PBR314 | Public Law | 74% | 77% | -3%* |
| PBR324 | Public Law | 87% | 90% | -3%* |
| PBR414 | Public Law | 85% | 89% | -4%* |
| PBR424 | Public Law | 79% | 79% | 0% |
| PSN114 | Law of Persons | 53% | 54% | -1% |
| REN108 | English Skills | 74% | 90% | -16% |
| RGK114 | Historical Foundations of South African Law | 72% | 72% | 0% |
| RGL414 | Jurisprudence | 83% | 82% | 1% |
| RGL424 | Jurisprudence | 86% | 87% | -1%* |
| RPK112 | Legal Practice | 77% | 85% | -8%* |
| RPK122 | Legal Practice | 67% | 69% | -2%* |
| RPK214 | Legal Practice | 93% | 97% | -4%* |
| RPK312 | Legal Practice | 96% | 98% | -2%* |
| RPK322 | Legal Practice | 94% | 95% | -1%* |
| RPK412 | Legal Practice | 98% | 94% | 4% |
| RPK422 | Legal Practice | 95% | 97% | -2%* |
| RPL224 | Legal Pluralism | 76% | 73% | 3% |
| RSK424 | Research Report | 89% | 87% | 2% |
| SAK324 | Law of Property | 78% | 85% | -7%* |
| SFR114 | Criminal Law | 59% | 61% | -2%* |
| SFR124 | Criminal Law | 79% | 89% | -10%* |
| SFR214 | Criminal Law | 69% | 65% | 4% |
| SPF224 | Criminal Procedure | 76% | 73% | 3% |
| SVP414 | Civil Procedure | 93% | 95% | -2%* |
| UFS101 | UFS101 | 62% | 70% | -8%* |
| ULL214 | Legal Interpretation | 73% | 69% | 4% |
| VBR324 | Law of Obligations | 89% | 83% | 6% |

* Extended LLB students (study code 3303) recorded higher success rates in these modules when compared to the success rates of mainstream LLB students (study code 3303).

**Table 1:** Comparison of the success rates per module of students registered for programme codes 3302 and 3303.

It is clear from Table 1 that the extended LLB has had a measure of success in assisting students with lower admission scores to acquire the necessary skills to successfully complete LLB modules. Five-year LLB students performed on par or better than four-year LLB students in 29 of the 44 compulsory mainstream LLB modules.

The performance of the five-year LLB students appears to be supported by foundation/base modules in the subject field. For example, the foundation module in Legal Skills addresses aspects of the modules in Legal Practice, Criminal Law and Law of Criminal Procedure. Extended LLB students recorded higher success rates in these modules (RPK112, RPK122, RPK214, RPK312, RPK322, RPK422, SFR114, SFR124, SVP414) than mainstream LLB students. In the same vein, the Academic Language course could have contributed towards extended LLB students' higher success of 16% rate in REN108. The highest difference in success rates of extended and mainstream LLB students was recorded for ERF224. The success rate of mainstream LLB students was 19% higher when compared to the pass rate of extended LLB students.

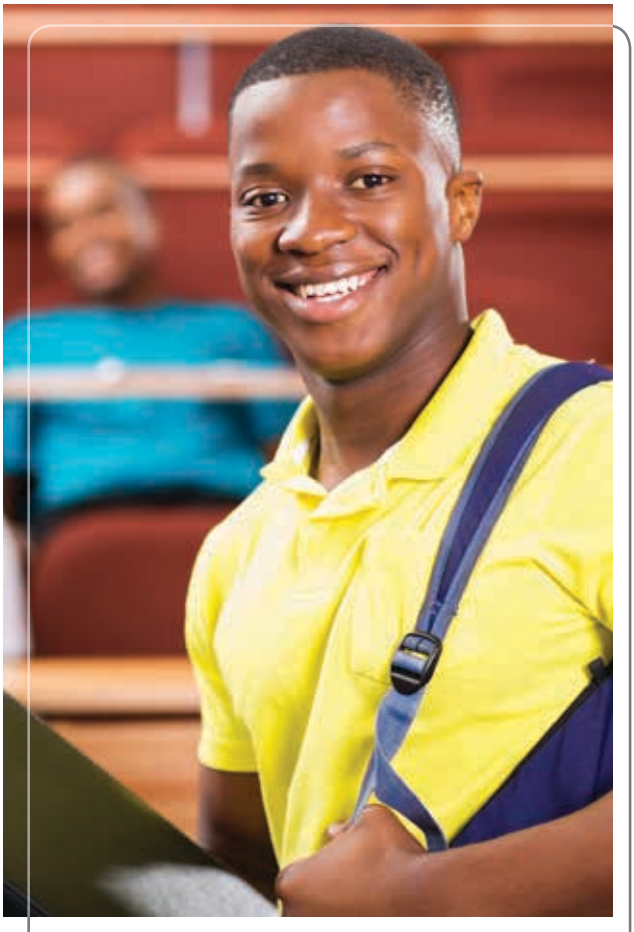
## Adjustments made to Enhance the Quality of the Extended LLB Programme

The findings of the study at the beginning of 2015 required certain adjustments to the five-year LLB programme. We were of the opinion that extended LLB students' pass rates could be improved in those modules that required a high level of application of knowledge (e.g. MMF424, KON214, BIR324, ERF224). The study guide of Legal Skills was amended to include more practical work and the application of knowledge. A continuous assessment approach was adopted that includes practical exercises, assignments and tests. In addition, a reading guide was developed for the Legal Skills module, which mainly includes law articles and texts that could prepare them better in the application of knowledge to real life situations. The other foundational modules were also redesigned. The lecturer of the foundation module in Mathematical Literacy redesigned the study guide in such a way that it is specifically aimed at law students and the activities are designed to emphasise law skills and legal principles. Both the Afrikaans and English language modules' content was adapted so that it now contains more law content.

Considering that group work activities are required of extended LLB students from their third year of study, the skill of working in groups is now also attended to in the foundation modules. A video recording was also made of the UFS moot court competition and this is used to train students in the Legal Skills module in argumentation skills and general court practices and etiquette. Since 2015, the students in the Legal Skills module also have had extensive writing sessions at the Write Site of the UFS. They attend at least two sessions (one formal and one informal) at the site during which they are assisted in the writing process and in the second semester of 2015 an online component forms part of the endeavour to improve the writing skills of extended LLB students. Another major intervention was made when extended LLB students were not only separated from mainstream LLB students in the foundation modules, but also in the mainstream modules of the first year of the four-year LLB.

## Conclusion

The five-year LLB provides access to students who were previously excluded from legal studies at the UFS. In this regard, it makes a meaningful contribution towards the transformation of legal education and the legal professions in South Africa. The impact of the interventions described above on the success rates of five-year LLB students will be re-evaluated at the end of 2015. The Faculty of Law needs to engage in further dialogue, enquiry and research to further unravel the impact of the five-year LLB on students' academic success. ■



# Making an impact on the quality of the Higher Certificate in Theology

Dr Thomas Resane

## Background

The Higher Certificate in Theology offers a general and basic encounter with the study of Christian ministry. The programme started in 2013 with three students, which increased to five students in the second semester. It includes training in applicable skills designed to empower Christian leaders to make a meaningful impact in communities and the building up of churches. The contact sessions are ten hours offered twice a month.

## Broadening access and improving quality

The Faculty of Theology has embarked on marketing and promoting this qualification since it creates more opportunities for students to articulate towards either extended or a full four years Bachelor's degree. For those students who obtain 65%-74%, the higher certificate creates the opportunity to articulate into the Extended Bachelor in Divinity, which is five years. Those obtaining 75% and above can articulate into the four-year Bachelor in Divinity. The Higher Certificate in Theology is a 'literacy gateway' into the mainstream of access to the university's higher qualifications and aims to create a thirst for lifelong learning.

One of the key areas of improvement in teaching and learning is related to academic literacy skills. The pedagogical approach in this literacy module facilitates the development of mastery of organising, understanding, discussing and producing textual material, whether spoken or written. The Write Site, as part of the Unit for Language Development, based at Centre of Teaching and Learning (CTL) exists to assist students with this need. This site is geared towards addressing the writing needs of undergraduate students across the curriculum. The collaboration between the Write Site and the Faculty of Theology is vital because it forms the link between students' academic needs and the writing demands of the faculty.

Other intentional efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning include a focus on active and experiential learning; and the appropriate use of technology to maximise student learning. Teaching and learning materials are continuously reviewed to find ways of making learning materials more affordable.

The Higher Certificate in Theology has the potential to attract prospective community workers, since it is culturally and socially relevant to equip leaders for effective community work. The impact on its quality is needed around the areas of making it a process of creating desire for further studies, academic literacy skills, service learning assessment, active learning enhancement, and learning materials that are cost affordable. ■

# HIGHLIGHTING INNOVATION AS A DRIVER FOR CHANGE

# Making maths more manageable

Elzmarie Oosthuizen and Gert Hanekom

South African school leavers' under preparedness for university level mathematics has been a burning issue for some time. Many high school learners opt for mathematical literacy at school, rather than mathematics as such. This choice makes it impossible for these learners to access fields of higher education study, even via extended degree programmes and access programmes such as the University of the Free State's (UFS) University Preparation Programme (UPP) and extended degree programmes that traditionally require a certain performance level in high school mathematics. Furthermore, those who do opt for mathematics often do not perform very well on their final National Senior Certificate (NSC) results for the subject and subsequently find themselves in the same boat as those mentioned above.

The office of the Teaching and Learning Manager, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (NAS) at the UFS has, as a result, engaged in innovative mathematics course development over the past few years. The aim here is to assist these students with gaining access, with greater prospects for success in their degree studies. This brief report provides an overview of the approaches followed in developing these courses and interventions, as well as the demonstrable impact they have already had on students' success at the UFS.

## Pre-calculus pass rates: From zeros to heroes

All Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) and NAS students in the UPP and extended degree programmes enrol for the subject pre-calculus. In the past, the pass rate in this subject has been as low as 34%. Without any change in the typical student profile, course content or typical weekly contact time, this pass rate improved from 34% in 2010 to 94% in 2015 (Table 1).

In 2011, the same course was presented on the Bloemfontein Campus by employing a more traditional, lecture-centred teaching and learning approach. A different approach, entailing some course development and one added pre-assessment intervention, as explained below, were employed on the South Campus and the comparative results were significantly different, with the South Campus students outperforming those on the Bloemfontein campus (see Table 2). This is noteworthy, if one considers the fact that the Bloemfontein campus students' average AP score was then, as it is now, higher than that of the South Campus students'.

| Year | Number of students enrolled | Pass rate |
|---|---|---|
| 2010 | 157 | 34% |
| 2011 | 188 | 79% |
| 2012 | 157 | 89% |
| 2013 | 178 | 94% |
| 2014 | 186 | 82% |
| 2015 | 295 | 94% |

**Table 1:** Pre-calculus pass rates from 2010 to the present.

| Campus | Year | Number of students enrolled | Pass Rate |
|---|---|---|---|
| South | 2011 | 188 | 79% |
| Bloemfontein | 2011 | 220 | 61% |

**Table 2:** 2011 campus-comparative pass rates in Pre-calculus.

*What did the added course development and interventions on South Campus involve?* In essence, these involved giving the students more responsibility for their own and their peers' learning, while also increasing the quality and availability of academic support. This was partly achieved by making the teaching process more responsive and implementing strategies and opportunities based on concepts akin to Peer Tutoring, Productive Persistence, Productive Struggle and the notion of giving students a Strong Start.

One intervention that seems to impact on the increased pass rates in pre-calculus takes the form of non-compulsory pre-assessment peer-learning preparation sessions typically held on the last Saturday before a semester test or examination. In these sessions, students are given worksheets with the types of questions they might expect to be confronted with in the following week's examination or test. They sit in discussion groups around tables and work through these worksheets. The rules of these sessions stipulate that students should first try and solve the problems individually. If they struggle, they engage with their classmates who are at the same table. If the problem can't be solved in the group, they are allowed to call on academic assistants, or "Demis", to help them. If the solutions still prove problematic, they are allowed to consult one of the senior supervisors. Students are also provided with a light breakfast and lunch to compensate them for the extra travelling costs incurred by going in to the venue outside of regular class hours. Here are some of the comments made by both students and demis in relation to how they perceive these special Saturday sessions:

> *"I think it definitely helps to prepare better. If I don't come to these sessions, my marks are not so good in the test." (Student)*

> *"I don't get distracted here. At home it is sometimes difficult to prepare properly for tests and exams." (Student)*

> *"I used to be in these special sessions myself and being a demi here also helps me to keep sharp on the basics. So I think it helps me in my own studies." (Demi)*

> *"These sessions are maybe a bit long, but it is easy for them [the students] to concentrate, because they get to talk to each other all the time about the work and really get help with their problems." (Demi)*

## Jan-mester course: Striving for more impact

Over the past four years, a spin-off of the developments detailed above has been a new initiative aimed at UPP and Extended degree applicants whose entry level mathematics scores are too low.

Traditionally, as a result of faculty-specific requirements students are not allowed to enter either the EMS or NAS study options of the UPP and Extended degrees if they did not take mathematics at school or achieved at least 40% for mathematics at school. In 2015, for the first time, students such as these were given an opportunity to enter the NAS study option of the UPP and Extended degrees by enrolling for an intensive ten-day course to acquire the mathematics they would have acquired had they opted for mathematics at school. This course was presented from early to mid-January, before registration. Candidates had to pass this "crash course" as a kind of last resort to gain access to their intended studies.

Of the 34 students who entered the Jan-mester course in 2015, 30 passed and gained access to their intended studies. The nature of the impact this course had in terms of this small group only became apparent later on though, when the results of all students who enrolled for pre-calculus, on all campuses, were calculated. It is important to bear in mind that the students who passed the Jan-mester course in many cases did not even have mathematics at school and those who did had very low results.

One example of the impact of this support programme is the profile and performance of one student who obtained his National Senior Certificate (NSC) in 2009 with the following results:

| NSC Subjects | Results (%) | Performance Level (UFS AP total: 20) |
|---|---|---|
| Afrikaans Home Language | 54% | Level 4 |
| English First Additional Lang | 58% | Level 4 |
| Mathematical Literacy | 78% | Level 6 |
| Life Orientation | 39% | Level 2 |
| Geography | 40% | Level 3 |
| Physical Sciences | 17% | Level 1 |
| Tourism | 46% | Level 3 |

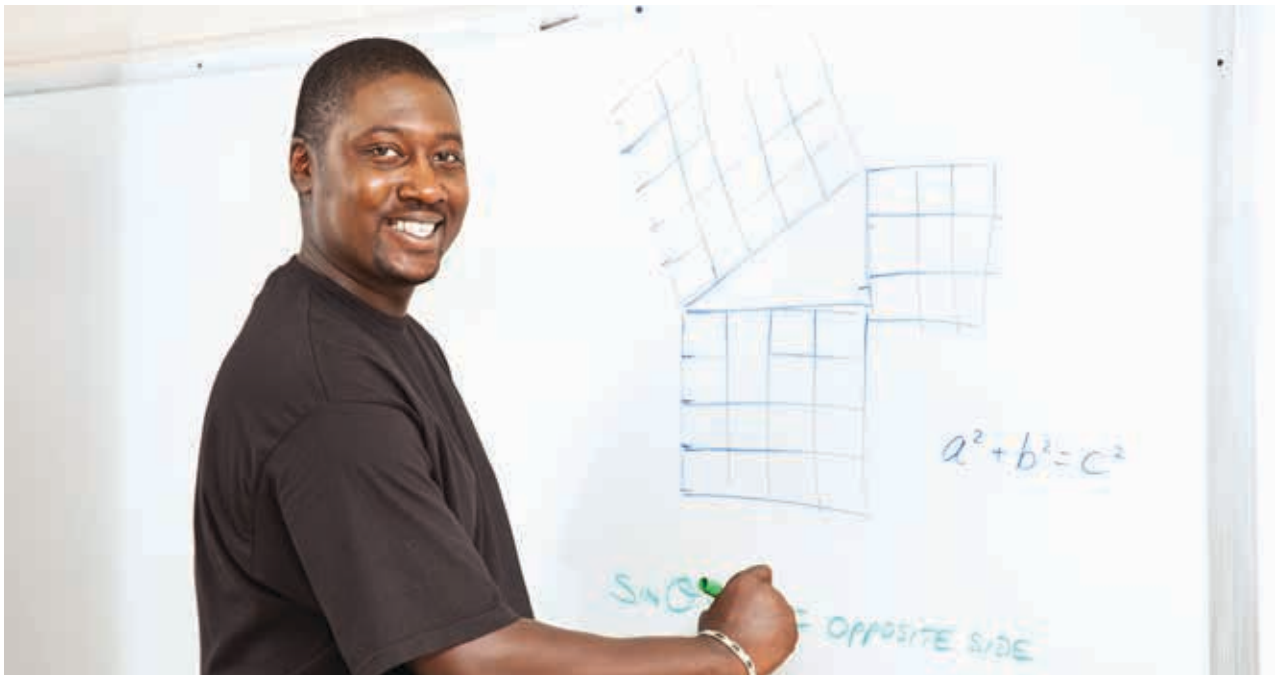
**Table 3:** NSC results of a student who passed the January 2015 crash course.

The student's marks were too low to be admitted to degree studies. He joined the crash course and performed so well that he was allowed to enrol for the UPP Mathematics and Chemistry course although he did not meet any of the faculty-specific entry requirements. The same student performed exceptionally well and was awarded the best BSc student prize on South campus. The module results of this student are visible in table 4.

This programme has not only provided access to 30 students, but more than 85% of the remaining group passed all of their first semester subjects, which is remarkable. Therefore, it is clear that the interventions and course developments made by the programme has had, and continues to have an impact on students' success in mathematics and their subsequent prospects for successful further degree studies in the NAS and EMS faculties at the UFS.

| Subject (code) | Result (%) |
|---|---|
| BLGY1513 | 83% |
| CHEM1412 | 80% |
| CHEM1532 | 85% |
| CSIL1551 | 80% |
| MATD1554 | 84% |

**Table 4:** The 1st-semester 2015 UFS module results of the above-mentioned student who completed the January 2015 crash course. ■



# UFS101: Moving towards High-Impact Practices

Lauren Oosthuizen

## The curriculum change of UFS101 in 2015

At the University of the Free State, the compulsory first-year seminar, UFS101, was initially positioned as a multi-disciplinary core-curriculum module. In 2015, the UFS101 syllabus was changed to include a full semester of teaching academic success skills. The first semester was designed to support students to function in an environment that requires computer literacy, articulating the benefits of a higher education through academic advising, and enhancing students' critical thinking skills. The aim in the second semester was to show students how multiple perspectives can be used to engage with complex problems. The content in the second semester addressed the application of critical thinking skills through multi-disciplinary perspectives.

## First semester: Academic success skills content

In *Unit 1: Technology at a university*, students were taught to navigate the intranet, Blackboard, the UFS101 eGuide (interactive online study guide), create a Word document, a PowerPoint Presentation and search for academic resources.

Scaffolding was provided for this unit, thus students already familiar with these skills could access more advanced content and work on that during the face-to-face classes.

In *Unit 2: Will I have a job after graduating?*, students were expected to analyse their priorities, demonstrate a basic understanding of self, describe the characteristics of a successful student, set goals related to their undergraduate degree, create strategies to achieve goals, discuss the undergraduate experience after a simulation of the undergraduate experience in class, and express a basic comprehension of the world of work.

In *Unit 3: Am I a critical thinker? Putting the ME in meta-cognition*, students were taught to identify the main themes in an academic article, demonstrate creative thinking by thinking in new ways about problem-solving, demonstrate decision-making skills, and demonstrate memory skills.

## Second semester: Common intellectual experience (core-curriculum)

The common intellectual experience introduced students to different disciplinary units in the second semester. The content was grouped into three combinations of three units each – students then chose the combination they were interested in. It was revealed in research that students engage with content and each other when they are interested in the topic. The combinations were capped at 1 700 students per combo. Students were expected to attend the learning experiences in each combination. The combinations are as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Combo A** | *Economics | Law | History |
| **Combo B** | Chemistry | Astronomy | *Social Psychology |
| **Combo C** | Anthropology | Social Psychology | Economics |

**Table 1:** Subject combinations available as part of the UFS101 learning experience.

*Economics and Social Psychology feature in two combinations as they were rated the most interesting and most relevant units by students in previous years. The nature of the topics was also aligned with the attributes that the UFS would like to foster in all Kovsie graduates.

## Research focus

The incorporation of academic success skills in the compulsory module was initiated as a strategic move to improve the university's retention and success rates in the first year of study.

The new component in UFS101 prompted a participatory action research approach to evaluating the student experience of the first semester content. After detailed training in the new content, the Teaching Assistants were asked what their expectations were in terms of student attitude and receipt of the content. The Teaching Assistants were excited about the new content, recognising the need for this level of academic support, but they felt that the module would only be serving underprepared students who struggle to adapt to university (they did not realise many of our students are eligible for university but not prepared for it). Many Teaching Assistants voiced the expectation that students would negatively perceive the new content as too basic or as the life orientation subject they had at school. During the course of the year, the Teaching Assistants wrote weekly reports on the student experience and provided detailed feedback per session which was essential for improving the content and implementation of UFS101. The students also completed a survey at the end of both semesters in order for the UFS101 team to better understand their experiences and needs. This data will be available for analysis towards the end of 2015.

## Student experience of academic success skills content

On the Bloemfontein campus, 3 612 (71% response rate) students completed the first semester survey and 673 (85% response rate) students on the Qwaqwa campus completed the first semester survey. The majority of students agreed that the content they learned in UFS101 helped them to meet the learning outcomes. The graphs below represent students' responses when they were asked what they had learned in the first semester that they did not know before.

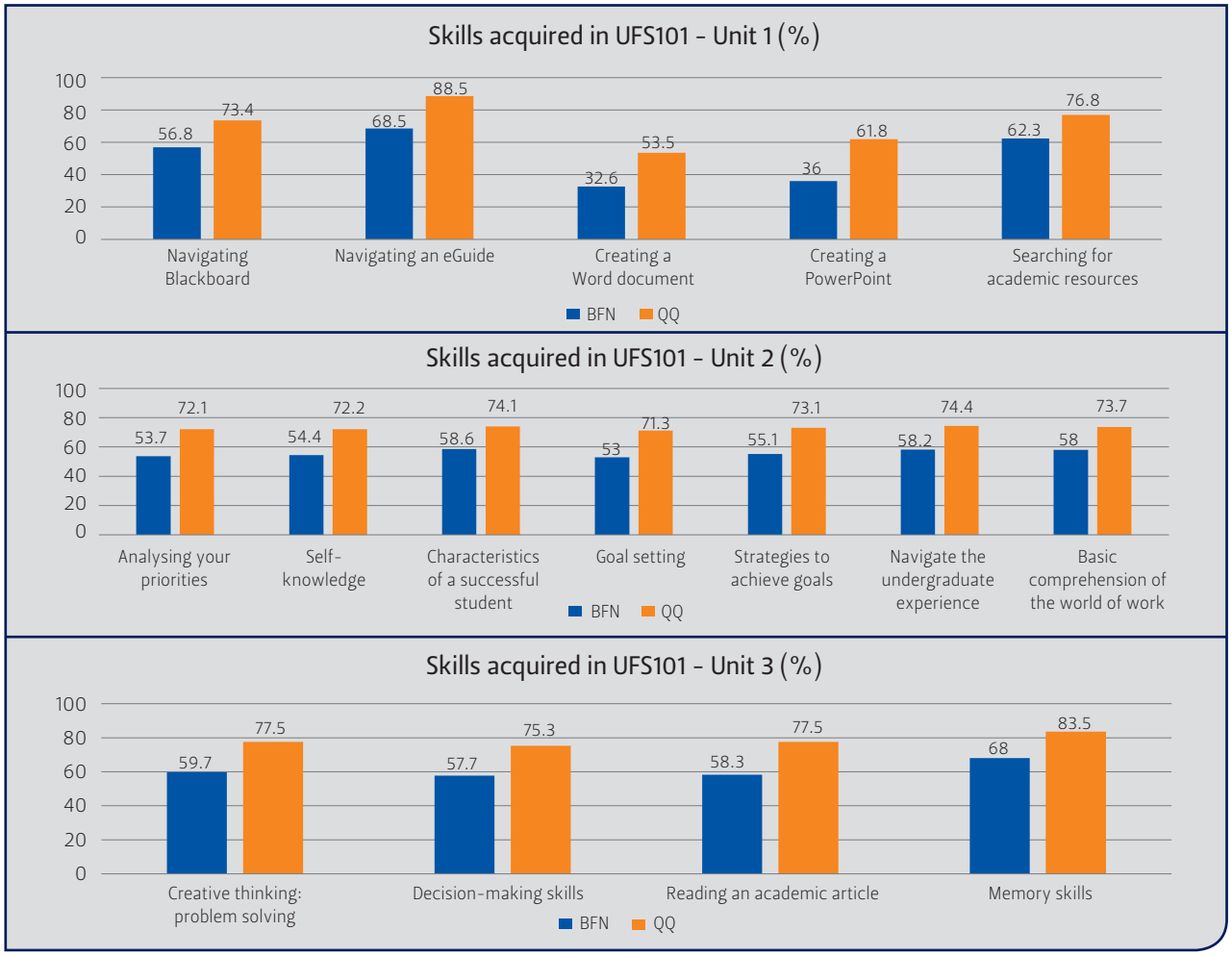



**Figure 1:** Students' reported skills acquired in UFS101 from Unit 1 – 3.

Students were also asked if the content in the first semester helped them with their studies – the quotes below are a few of the responses:

*"Yes, I learn how to think critically and analyse while reading."*

*"Yes I did, I was able to learn to talk in class and learnt about different study methods."*

*"Yes, setting SMART goals and becoming a critical thinker."*

*"Yes, it actually prepared me for university life and how to be successful in my studies"*

*"Yes, to identify main ideas in texts"*

*"Yes, it showed me how to do assessments and how to submit assessments for modules"*

*"Yes, the study methods that were presented were much more practical and I implemented some of them."*

*"Yes. I enjoyed the goal setting theory and I apply it almost all the time."*

*"I was able to apply the SMART analysis, understand the context of my texts, use memory skills and become a critical thinker"*

## Experience of the common intellectual experience (core-curriculum)

The weekly reports written by the Teaching Assistants gave some insight of the student experience, as described in the quotes below:

*"Students appreciated the academic freedom provided within the choice of the content specific combos. In combo B, the science students spoke to me about the social science and leadership content within the combo, and told me how much they enjoyed it. The same was said regarding chemistry and astronomy from the perspective of students in different fields."*

*"When asked what was most related to them as students, they indicated that the subject on knowing one's rights as well as our conversation on the constitution was much related to them as they need to know this for their own lives."*

*"The most satisfying academic achievement that I received within the second semester was students that thanked me for teaching them something they did not know."*

*"Students actively raised their opinions on ethics in research, why conformity is a part of our everyday lives and why authority is important to keep in mind when carrying out instructions."*

*"In semester 1, we learnt about the characteristics of successful students, and one article purported that students that do well in schools are those that relate their studies to their passions. Students were engaged, they wanted to stay longer for class, conversation continued as we walked through the hallways of EXR's, because for the first time, they talked about things that mattered to them."*

A longitudinal impact analysis will be conducted to determine if the new curriculum in UFS101 has contributed to the students' overall success rate in terms of degree completion at the UFS. The UFS101 team provide an important example of how important pre-implementation planning and conjoint monitoring is to ensure that innovation leads to higher quality teaching and learning. ■

# Academic modules receive a makeover: The Module Makeover Project

Linley Fourie

The Module Makeover project is a Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), University of the Free State (UFS) initiative wherein academics can volunteer their module to undergo a makeover. As the term *Module Makeover* suggests, the concerning module goes through a transformation to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the module. Each makeover aims to address various needs in the module by incorporating CTL proposed resources and interventions into the module's curriculum delivery, and like any makeover, the ultimate goal is that the 'after photo' should outdo the 'before photo'.

In 2015, 23 modules from five faculties (see Figure 1) were involved in the project on the Bloemfontein and South campus of the UFS. Four of the 23 modules were implemented on the South Campus. The 13 first semester modules contributed toward the project's pilot study, and the other 10 modules are currently involved in the second semester module makeover process (see Figure 2).

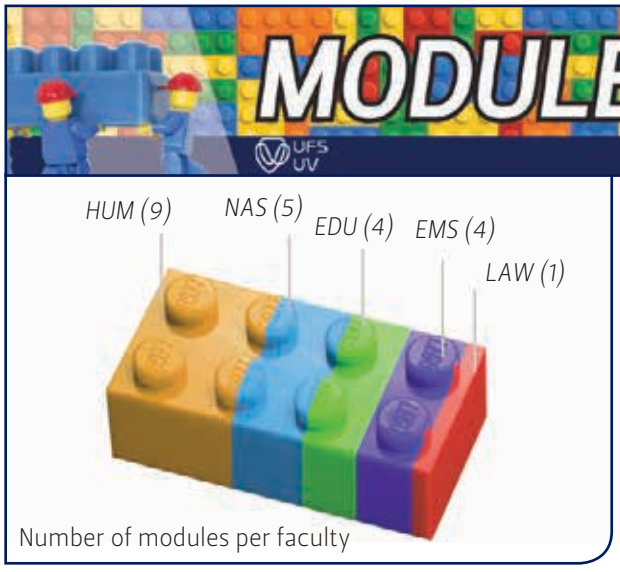



**Figure 1:** Breakdown of modules in 2015's module makeover project according to faculty.

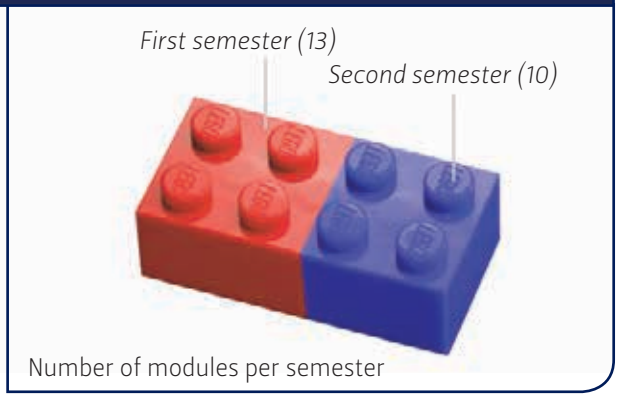



**Figure 2:** Breakdown of modules in 2015's module makeover project according to duration.

## Types of makeovers

The project attempts to make provision for the considerable differences amongst academics, in terms of availability, module needs, module delivery and student group, by providing an option of three types of makeovers.

The academic can participate in a minute, mini, or major makeover, which increases in duration respectively.

Each type has a proposed set of resources and interventions, as well as the staff development opportunities which the academic will require.

The infographic (Figure 3) was used as a guideline in the pilot project, and could be customised to accommodate each module's individual needs.

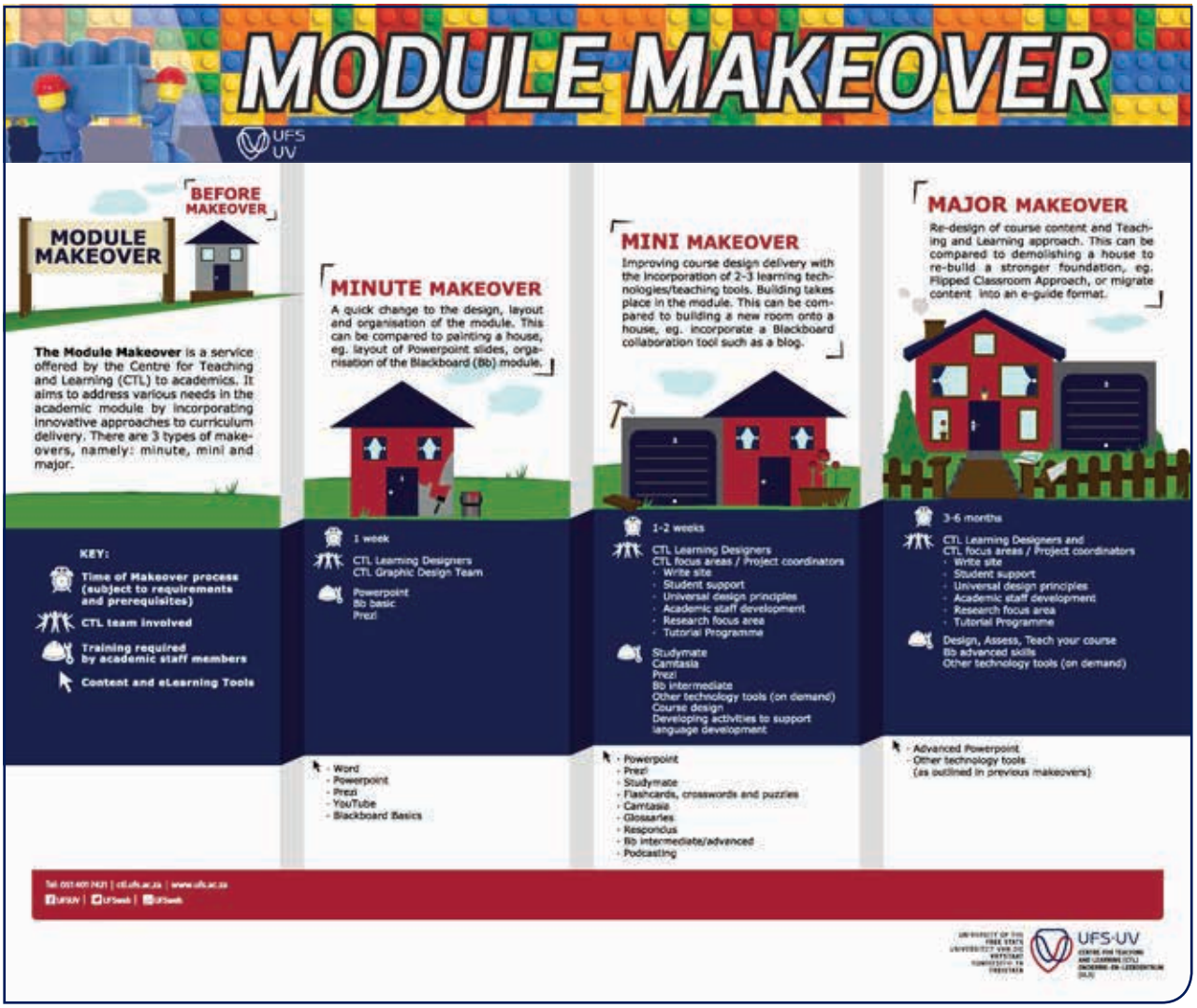



Figure 3: Infographic used for the pilot study showing the proposed resources and interventions under each makeover type.

## Resources and interventions used in the project

The project integrates various CTL services and role-players necessary to fully study and understand the opportunity for making a positive impact in the module, by selecting the most relevant approaches for the makeover.

Each module completed a module analysis, which was in the form of a survey. The main challenges identified were of an organizational nature (managing large classes, translation and proof-reading of materials and marking workload) and challenges with students (disengaged, poor language proficiency, poor class attendance and lack of motivation). CTL role-players and learning designers worked in a team-work context with academics to implement strategies which may address these challenges. After gathering feedback from the modules in the pilot study (n= 8), the main CTL resources which academics consulted throughout the makeover were the faculty's learning designer (87.5%), the CLASSE project (37.5%), and the Write Site (12.5%).

Respondents were asked to rate each of the resources which they made use of on a Likert Scale from 1 (Not Satisfactory) to 5 (Excellent). The resources were well-received with the majority of respondents valuing the services provided as Excellent, which is also evidenced in the following response from a module makeover pilot project participant: *"...the expertise and helpfulness of CTL staff while certain aspects of the modules was converted to Bb, and also afterwards, when some of the planned learning activities had to be performed in an online environment, was commendable."*

The most predominant interventions implemented were assessment practices, including online formative assessments, of which 62.5% of modules incorporated in their makeover. Half of the respondents (50%) implemented either a glossary activity, formal writing activities, and/or a Blackboard tool. Other strategies

which were adopted, include a concept map, making use of tutors, use of multimedia, and reviewed study materials. The interventions were also evaluated with a Likert Scale from 1 (Not Effective) to 3 (Effective) in addressing the module's challenges. All respondents which implemented either a concept map, a Blackboard tool (such as a discussion board), a write site strategy, and/or reviewed their study material, evaluated the intervention(s) by selecting Effective. Two interventions which were also deemed as Effective interventions (average: 2.8 and 2.6) were, incorporating a glossary into the curriculum and using online formative assessments.

It was positive to find that 50% of academics have used their makeover intervention(s) in other modules that they teach that were not part of the module makeover, while 75% also recommended interventions to their colleagues.

The majority of respondents evaluated students' experience of the intervention through either formal and/or informal evaluation methods (for example: module evaluation, and/or informal written feedback). Most of the respondents (37,5%) reported that students' think the interventions were a good addition to the module.

**Figure 4:** Participants and consultants at the 2015 Module Makeover orientation session.

## Conclusion

It was found that overall the respondents had a positive experience participating in a makeover, and 87.5% of respondents would recommend the module makeover process to a colleague, this was also evidenced by some of the responses to the question of what their overall experience of the Module Makeover project was:

*"It was great being exposed to new and innovative ways of teaching and learning by a very competent team."*

*"Very good – we had assistance throughout the design and the implementation of the module."*

*"Thank you for allowing me to be part of the project!"* ■

# EVIDENCE-BASED CHANGE THROUGH ASSESSMENT

# Data analytics pivotal in teaching and learning success within the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Dr Corlia Janse van Vuuren

## Background

Student success and high quality teaching and learning practices are the main focus areas of Higher Education worldwide, mainly as a result of demanded accountability. South Africa is also no exception, with Higher Education legislation highlighting these areas as the most important within the South African Higher Education environment *(White Paper for Post-school Education and Training: Building and expanded, effective and integrated Post-school system*, 2013*)*. Norris and Baer (2013) describe data analytics as "critical" in the quest for enhanced quality and associated improved student success. They argue that data analytics has the potential to identify effective and efficient teaching and learning practices, models and innovations in order to sustain Higher Education for the future.

Data analytics mostly include a set or sets of data sources from which collection, integration and analysis can be done. A range of sources should be considered as this allows for more meaningful interpretations, than statistics in isolation *(*Ali et al., 2012*)*. The inclusion of a range of data sources also allows stakeholders to "choose from a flexible and extendable set of indicators" *(*Dyckhoff et al., 2012*)*. Data analytics are mostly divided into two distinct types namely learning analytics on the one hand and academic analytics on the other hand (Siemens & Long, 2011). Learning analytics is more specific than academic analytics and focuses on the learner, learning process and learning contexts, whilst academic analytics mostly focuses on data analysis at institutional level (Siemens & Long, 2011).

## Data analytics in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

Building on this theoretical framework, the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) at the University of the Free State (UFS) embarked on the establishment of a data analytics model to support and drive teaching and learning success in the faculty.

The first step in building this model was the identification of the most important factors influencing teaching and learning success within the faculty and secondly identifying data sources to provide evidence on each of these factors (see Figure 1).

## Learning analytics

- **Student perceptions**
- Student focus groups
- CLASSEstudent
- Module evaluations

- **Academic perceptions**
- Academic interviews
- CLASSElecturer
- Academic questionnaires on graduate attributes, employability and stakeholder interaction
- Academic questionnaires on student support structures, including markers and tutorials
- Module-specific constructive alignment with reference to learning outcomes, learning material and assessment

## Academic analytics

- **Faculty-based institutional database**
- Year
- Student numbers
- Campus
- Location
- Qualification level
- Programme per faculty
- Programme
- Gender
- Race
- Age
- M Score
- Qualification start date
- Home and Instructional language
- Entrance category
- Module information (i.e. NQF level, credits, mode of delivery)
- Module marks (i.e. progression marks, semester marks, examination marks, final marks)
- NSC results (with special reference to Mathematics and Accounting)

**Figure 1:** Factors included in a faculty-based data analytics model.

Next, these factors, with the supporting data, were included within the faculty-based data analytics model on a modular level. For each undergraduate module presented within the faculty, a data analytics model was built in an effort to triangulate, interpret and integrate the data from the different data sources. A data analytics model for each of these modules was built using the Teaching and Learning Module Pyramid as a basis (see Figure 2).

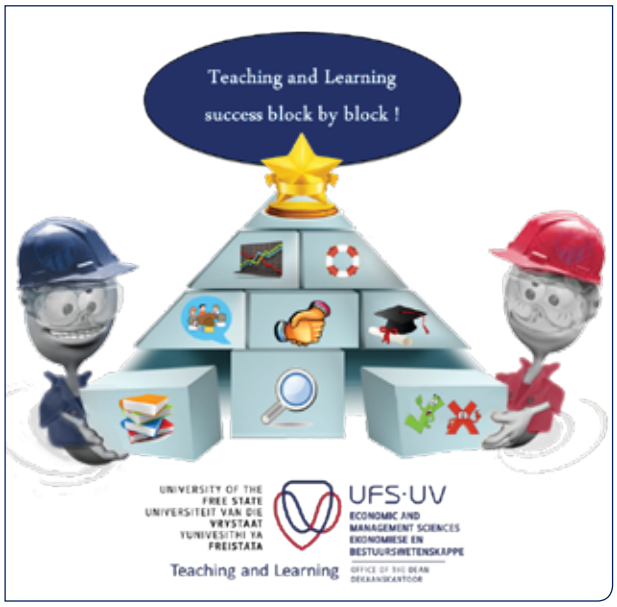



**Figure 2:** EMS Teaching and Learning Module Pyramid.

Within the Teaching and Learning Module Pyramid, results that could influence student success within the particular module were firstly identified and then substantiated with evidence from one or more data sources. Secondly, changes in student success, more specifically with regard to the module success rate, were investigated and described against the background of available evidence. Herein, there was a specific focus on changes to teaching and learning practices and/or pedagogy made within the module.

This approach provided important teaching and learning, evidence-based results on a modular, but also on a departmental and faculty-level. The development of the Teaching and Learning Module Pyramid for undergraduate modules also provided important baseline information with regard to teaching and learning successes and needs within the faculty. It would furthermore serve as an important starting point for future interventions within teaching and learning, but also for specific, individualised staff development interventions and/or actions.

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# GENL1408: Can developmental modules make a difference?

Eleanor Bernard

## Why was GENL1408 implemented?

According to Van Wyk (2014) the English linguistic competence of first-years entering the QwaQwa campus of the University of the Free State (UFS) presents many challenges. Many students have great difficulty accessing English textbooks, writing academic essays and assignments, taking notes in class and interacting in lectures. The language skills needed in this respect are known as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) or more simply, conversational skills. These are the skills required to communicate on a daily basis, for example, when ordering food from a menu or when reading a newspaper. Because these students do not speak English often, they lack these skills. Lecturers expect students to be able to write academically but in reality, the true outcome is not realised (Figure 1).

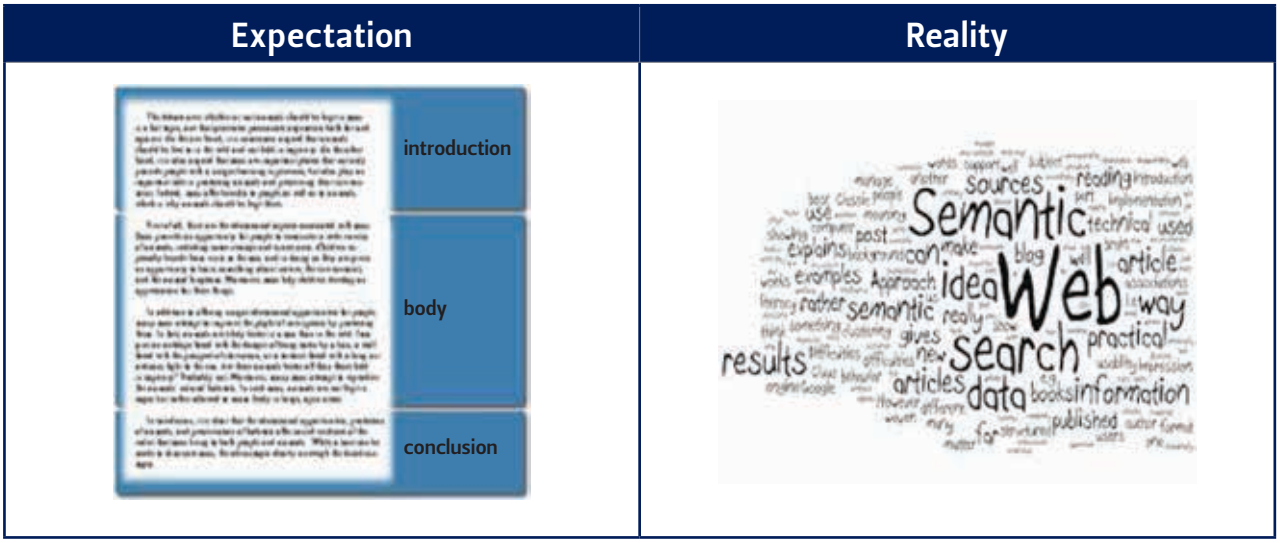


**Figure 1:** Students' literacy skills do not meet the expectations of lecturers.

To provide students with the opportunity of gaining the necessary general English language skills, the CTL, in collaboration with language practitioners, introduced the General English Literacy module in 2014.

## Aims with the implementation of GENL1408

Academic Literacy focuses on developing Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) or academic language proficiency in students. It equips students with the ability to classify, compare, identify cause and effect, and to interpret complex texts.

The GENL 1408 module aims to develop critical thinking, reading, writing, and language abilities through a series of tasks and activities. The main focus is to build on and develop students' general English language and literacy.

Grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing and oral competencies are the focus of the course. In their second year of study, students' progress onto a course in academic literacy, where the focus shifts to academic language proficiency. This provides students with the support they need to access their content areas and meet the communicative demands at university.

## The target group of GENL1408

Students who enrol for GENL1408 are students registered for the B.A. Extended Programme (four-year undergraduate degree) in their first year of studies. All of them are second-language speakers of English, although some of them have completed English as Home Language in high school. After completion of GENL1408 they progress to an academic literacy course in their second year of study.

## Research that supports the rationale behind GENL1408

The decision to implement a general language course was evidence-based and aimed to assist this particular cohort of students.

- Effective teaching of English does not occur in primary and secondary schools where the teachers themselves are not proficient in English (Reynecke, Meyer & Nel, 2010; Van Pletzen, 2006).
- Students obtain low scores on linguistic testing instruments (DIRAP Report, 2012).
- 75% of learners in South Africa are not exposed to the necessary 6-8 years of mother-tongue instruction needed to gain the CALP (Reynecke, Meyer & Nel, 2010; Van Pletzen, 2006).

In order to gauge the efficacy of the course, a small-scale experiment was conducted to monitor the efficacy of the course.

## Impact of the GENL1408 course

An entry test (or pre-test) was completed by 104 students at the beginning of semester 1 of 2014, testing their grammar and vocabulary knowledge. The same test was completed by the same 104 students at the end of semester 2. Students were not informed that the testing would take place, and therefore did not have the chance to prepare for this test. It ultimately tested the knowledge gained throughout the year. The results of these two tests (25 marks each for grammar and vocabulary) were compared and the following results were gained:

The students' grammar test scores increased from the Pre-Test (Mean (M) = 20.06, Standard Deviation (SD) = 3.25) to the Post-Test (M = 21.26, SD = 2.65). The average marks for the grammar test increased by 1.2 marks (out of 25) with a 95% confidence interval. Therefore,

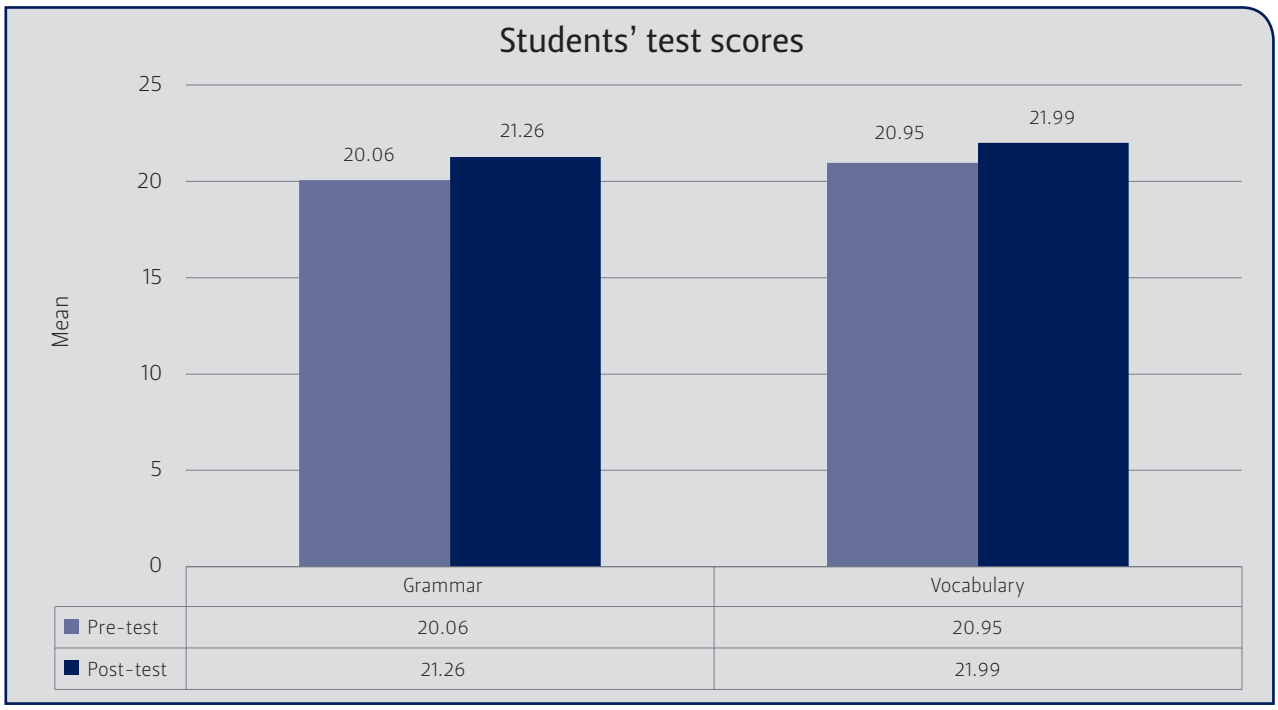


**Figure 2:** Students' mean post-test scores increased when compared to the mean pre-test scores.

the average mark obtained by the 104 students in the grammar test increased by 4.8% from the pre-test to the post-test.

The students' vocabulary test scores increased from the Pre-Test (M = 20.95, SD = 2.6) to the Post-Test (M = 21.99, SD = 2.03). The average marks increased for the vocabulary test increased by 1 mark (out of 25) with a 95% confidence interval. Therefore, the average mark obtained by the 104 students in the vocabulary test increased by 4% from the pre-test to the post-test.

By comparing the total marks obtained by the 104 students in the pre-test and post-test, the average marks increased from the Pre-Test (M = 41.00, SD = 5.12) to the Post-Test (M = 43.27, SD = 4.11). The average marks for the test (grammar and vocabulary) increased by 2.3 marks (out of 50) with a 95% confidence interval. Therefore, the average mark obtained by the 104 students in the test (grammar and vocabulary) increased by 4.5% from the pre-test to the post-test.

The results show that, on average, the students' grammar and vocabulary marks increased significantly after attending GENL 1408. By improving students' contextualised grammar knowledge and vocabulary knowledge, these developmental modules might assist in nurturing students' basic language proficiency to a threshold level of competence that will enable an improved opportunity of understanding the kind of communicative skills required at tertiary level.

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# Questionmark project: Raising the bar through e-assessment while cutting down on the marking

Anneri Meintjes

In 2012, the Centre for Teaching and Learning in collaboration with Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services launched the Electronic Teaching and Learning Environment Project (ETALE). The need for this project originated from the renewed international focus on teaching and learning; the rapid growth of new technologies and the need to be a competitive institution of learning. Within the two-year project, national and international trends in the use of technology in teaching were reviewed and the digital profile and teaching and learning needs of staff and students at the institution were established.

A notable recommendation that emerged from the, ETALE project[1] which was completed at the end of 2013, was that *assessment should be recognised as a critical component in teaching and learning*. ICT is progressively being incorporated in assessment practices in higher education. The increasing popularity of e-assessment can be attributed to its advantages which include time and cost savings in terms of grading, quick accessibility to results, and automatic record keeping for item analysis[2].

The strategic imperatives for the implementation of e-assessment practices at the UFS thus emanate from the recommendation of the ETALE project, as well as the possibilities it holds for innovation in teaching and learning practices. This is imminent from the advantages of e-assessment and increased use of formative assessment practices. Consequently, the university has responded to this need by investing in Questionmark, an e-assessment system used worldwide for computer-based assessment.

The implementation of Questionmark is taking place as a two-phased pilot for which the main goals are to:

1. Gather sufficient input from all relevant stakeholders;
2. Systematically establish a clear workflow; and
3. Ensure the efficacy of processes and procedures associated with implementing an e-assessment system in the UFS context.

A phased approach will be followed to ensure that all the relevant aspects of the process are well tested before a full-scale roll-out is set in motion. The first phase of the pilot took place in the second semester of 2015 and included participants from six faculties (all faculties excluding the Faculty of Law).

A total of 78 assessments were conducted in the first phase of the pilot among 11 modules with a total of 2 735 students enrolled from the Bloemfontein and South Campuses. These assessments included formative and summative assessments. Formative assessments were available on Questionmark for a period of time during which students had the opportunity to complete the assessment when and where they preferred. Summative assessments were completed in a controlled environment, in a computer laboratory with invigilation – simulating the circumstances of a summative assessment written in a traditional paper-based manner.

Of the 2 735 students who had completed assessments in Questionmark, a total of 329 completed a survey to provide feedback about their experience of using the software (a response rate of 12%).

1 The report on the findings of the ETALE project is available on request from the Centre for Teaching and Learning.

2 Terzis, V., & Economides, A. A. (2011). The acceptance and use of computer based assessment. *Computers & Education*, *56*(4), 1032–1044. doi:10.1016/j.compedu.2010.11.017.

## Analysis of the feedback results highlighted the following interesting findings:

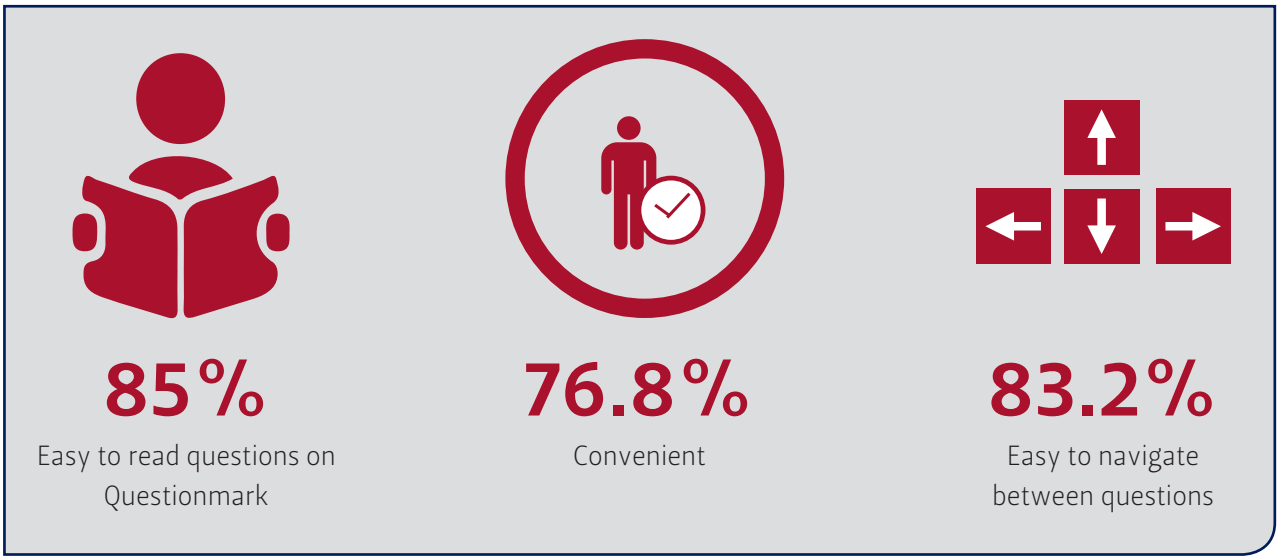


**Figure 1:** Students' feedback results regarding Questionmark.

As seen in Figure 1, a total of 85% of respondents indicated that they could easily read the questions on Questionmark, while 76.8% found it convenient to complete e-assessments. Of the students who completed the survey, 83.2% of respondents reported that they were easily able to navigate between questions.

Some of the aspects respondents experienced most positively regarding e-assessment include:

- Assessments can be completed in students' own time;
- Assessments can be completed individually; and
- Students immediately get their results after submitting an e-assessment.

Although students primarily experienced the Questionmark pilot positively, areas of concern include that 24.5% of respondents indicated that they experienced difficulty with their internet connection when completing assessments on Questionmark. These difficulties could both be experienced when completing assessments at home and on campus. This could result in minor inconveniences such as time delay in accessing or submitting assessments to major inconveniences that required technical assistance such as being unable to submit assessments. Furthermore, respondents experienced the following aspects of completing e-assessments on Questionmark negatively:

- Time limits on tests;
- Slow computers in the computer laboratories on campus; and
- Lack of feedback from lecturers.

Students liked that they received their results instantaneously, but they reported that they also needed more detailed feedback on their assessments. As Questionmark does allow for individualised feedback on assessments, this will be explored in the next phase of the pilot where lecturers will be encouraged to set up assessments in such a way as to provide more detailed feedback to students.

The second phase of the Questionmark pilot will take place in the first semester of 2016 and will include various modules on the QwaQwa campus as well.

During this phase e-assessment procedures will be formalised and the functionality of the software will be explored in more depth. After the second phase of the pilot a proposal for a large-scale roll-out of e-assessment practices at the UFS will be compiled based on the lessons learned in the pilot. The use of Questionmark at the UFS holds numerous advantages for student success at the institution. ■

# GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

# Student success portal: Quality online skills development for students

Nastassja Haarhoff

Research shows that carefully identified graduate attributes are globally recognised as being a critical outcome of higher education (De la Harpe & David, 2012). The Higher Education Quality Committee's (HEQC), Draft Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement, defines quality student learning in South African higher education as a combination of an increase in the number of graduates that have attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable" (HEQC, 2013). The development of these attributes needs to take place mainly through the curriculum in the classroom and should be complemented by co-curricular activities that strengthen these attributes.

The CTL in collaboration with faculties and Student Affairs embarked on the development of Student Success Portal. The aim of the portal is to develop students' graduate attributes, which include skills that are critical for academic success, lifelong learning and enhancing the employability of UFS graduates. The portal is designed to support students online so that they are able to access the portal any time of the day, anywhere in the world.

To ensure accessibility for all students, the portal has been developed on the UFS Learning Management System, Blackboard. The portal is easy accessible to students by simply logging into Blackboard with a UFS student number and password. Figure 1 shows the Home Page of the portal once a student has logged in. The portal is designed with HTML programming to allow additional features and to give the portal an exciting look that students will enjoy. An interactive menu bar allows students to choose from various helpful resources such as an overview, link to skills resources, links to workshops regarding skills that are hosted by the division and finally, a contact person for the students to contact should they have any queries.


**Figure 1:** Home page of student success portal.

From the research conducted, ten key skills were initially identified as necessary for students' graduate attributes development. They are:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Time Management | 6. Numeracy |
| 2. Communication | 7. Teamwork |
| 3. Academic Writing | 8. Leadership |
| 4. Study Skills | 9. Information Literacy |
| 5. Computer Literacy | 10. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving |

For the identification of the key skills and the conceptual design of the project, 367 academic articles, websites, videos, university resources and textbooks were considered.

These skills are available on the left pane under Skills Resources (see Figure 1). Once a student clicks on the resource that he/she would like to explore, there are numerous resources available. For example, under Time Management skills resources there are the tools such as a Time Management e-guide, videos regarding how to manage time, time management tips and how to improve time management skills (see Figure 2).

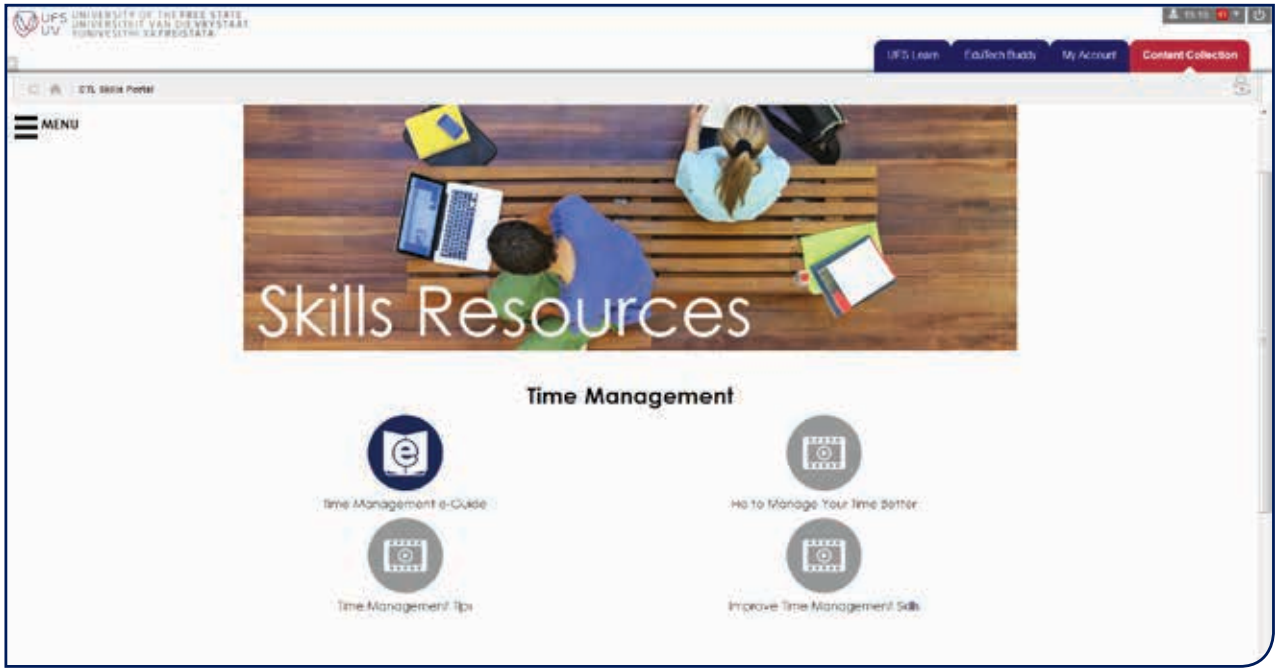


Figure 2: Under the section Skills Resources students will find eGuides and videos for each skill.

The aim is to launch the Student Skills Portal early in 2016. The CTL and stakeholders are already starting to explore the development of a digital portfolio system that will allow students to track their skills development and to provide potential employers with more than just a CV when they apply for a position.

## References

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