



**UFS – FET
collaboration**

**ACCESS WITH
SUCCESS THROUGH
THE DEVELOPMENT
OF
BRIDGING/EXTENDED
OPPORTUNITIES AT
FET COLLEGES**

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ASPECTS OF ACCESS WITH SUCCESS

- **Access in terms of admission:** To admit candidates to education and training opportunities
- **Access in terms of accessibility:** To create an education and training environment which is accessible in terms of financial accessibility, language of instruction, location and infrastructure (i.e. for disabled persons)
- **Success in terms of academic performance:** Questions to ask:
 - Do candidates pass qualifications and do they do so within prescribed timeframes?
 - Do candidates attain higher levels of achievement than merely passing?
 - Do qualifications empower candidates to gain access to other institutions (alignment and articulation)?
 - Are the teaching and learning and managerial environments conducive of student success?
 - How is the headache of finding opportunities for work placement dealt with
- **Success in terms of further learning and career opportunities:** Questions to ask:
 - Do NCV (e.g.) qualifications represent skills that are applicable in the World of Work?
 - Are qualifications accepted in the World of Work?
 - Where do we stand with N4-N6 (post-NCV L4 qualifications)

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- **MOTIVATION:** To develop one possible way in which to curb failure and attrition rates in FET Colleges, particularly at NCV L2 and thereby promoting access with success within NCV programmes at FET Colleges
- **GOAL:** To investigate the particular needs and practical issues in terms of establishing a bridging/extended programme, which will better prepare candidates for the challenges they have to face at NCV L2, and thereby hopefully contribute towards higher success rates at their completion of NCV L2

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED)

- **METHODOLOGY:** The investigation was conducted by circulating a discussion document (in the form of a questionnaire), which pinpointed key needs and practical issues, to which representatives from the participating FET Colleges were asked to send responses by a predetermined deadline
- **QUESTIONNAIRE COMPOSITION:** The questionnaire/discussion document was compiled from comments gleaned during a series of interviews with representatives from the participating FET Colleges during 2011
- **QUESTIONNAIRE FORMAT:** The questionnaire/discussion document took the form of statements based on the comments mentioned at the previous bullet, with a five-point scale to indicate whether the person(s) involved strongly agreed, agreed, was neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed, with space provided to comment on the decision

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION (CONTINUED)

- **GENERATING THE OUTCOMES:** The outcomes were generated by writing up and summarising responses to the statements and questions. Respondents were mostly either in agreement or strongly in agreement with all statements. The few points of contention, i.e. where different respondents were not in agreement, are clearly indicated during this presentation

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RESULTS PER SECTION

- Section 1:** bridging/extended curriculum outcomes, pitch and composition
- The curriculum should be composed of fundamental skills based on the subjects fields of the NCV L2 fundamental subjects, namely English, Mathematics/Mathematical Literacy, Life Orientation and Information and Communication Science (computer skills), the latter being a subject in its own right and not merely a part of LO
 - These subjects will have to be pitched at a much more basic level than the existing NCV L2 (NQF L2) subjects' level, i.e. preferably at NQF L1, in order to lay a proper foundation for NCV L2 and to address the "critical skills gap" that often leads to failure at NCV L2.
 - A suggestion was made that candidates in the bridging year should be allowed to enrol for two core subjects (e.g. Engineering subjects) at NCV L2, for which they would possibly receive credit, if successful, when they enter NCV L2. Most respondents, however, felt that this should not be allowed, as the primary focus should be on addressing the critical skills gap mentioned above and that students should not receive any credit for work during the bridging/extended year. This is still a point of contention, however, as the opportunity to gain credits could also act as a motivation for candidates to perform better

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- Vocational/career guidance/counselling should be readily and regularly available, if not mandatory in the bridging/extended year, e.g. candidates must attend weekly or fortnightly counselling sessions that actually count towards the successful completion of their bridging/extended year
- A thorough and effective placement/basic skills test should be developed for all NCV L2 applicants to determine whether or not they should enrol for the bridging/extended programme first
- In one case a group of respondents indicated that a remedial teaching approach should possibly be followed in cases where the critical skills gap is particularly large.

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- Section 2:** Timetable and contact time
- The number of students per class (depending on infrastructure and available salary funds) should not exceed 30 and should ideally be no more than 25
 - Candidates should have a full weekly academic programme of at least 6 to 7 hours per subject per week, as a skeletal timetable impacts negatively on motivation and ultimately on success
 - Class attendance should be made compulsory by either making it count towards candidates' final results or by refusing them completion of their bridging/extended year if they don't attend at least 80% of their classes (such a decision should be supported by the DHET)
 - The bridging/extended programme should span no more and no less than a full academic year

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

Section 3: Lecturing/facilitation of subjects

- Only highly skilled and experienced lecturers/facilitators, both in terms of subject knowledge (DHET Green Paper, p21) and pedagogy, should be employed, exactly because such persons are needed to bridge the critical skills gap
- Lecturers/facilitators should be well-informed (e.g. through the attendance of workshops, if necessary), if not experienced, in terms of the challenging socio-economic and educational backgrounds from which most FET candidates come; they should also be well-versed in candidates' cultural backgrounds

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

Section 4: Admission requirements

- As mentioned earlier, a thorough and effective placement/basic skills test should be developed for all NCV L2 applicants to determine whether or not they should enrol for the bridging/extended programme first
- Basic requirements for entry should not go beyond passing Grade 9, as, e.g., setting a higher bar for mathematics (than passing) would immediately eliminate many prospective candidates, and the idea in the first place should be to build the basic skills needed to succeed in NCV L2
- However, some respondents were of the opinion that there should be at least some requirements in terms of subject results at Grade 9 level, because taking in candidates who are too weak would just set them up for failure anyway
- RPL could also be an alternative route for admission
- There is some disagreement on this section and it is something that still has to be thrashed out extensively

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- **Section 5:** Further comments and suggestions
 - This bridging/extended programme should be registered and accredited with the HEQC and the DHET
 - Successful candidates should receive some form of certification that may allow them entry at any FET College in South Africa
 - There should be horizontal articulation to Grade 10 at Technical High Schools
 - In terms of UFS collaboration with participating FET Colleges on possible bridging projects that stem from this discussion: any such bridging/extended programmes should be entirely run by each participating college, with the UFS fulfilling a support/advisory role in terms of facilitator training and research
 - Exemplars or pilot studies should first be conducted to determine the practicability of such programmes
 - The UFS, through the Vice Rector responsible, is negotiating to include the CUT as an equal partner in this project, in the interest

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- The question was raised whether research and development efforts should rather be aimed at bridging/extended programmes at post-NCV L4, which would lead to studies in post-NCV L4 qualifications at FET or other vocational colleges or universities – respondents deemed the need to be more at NCV L2, as discussed during the larger part of this presentation, but some stated that some form of post-NCV L4 bridging to the institutions mentioned should also be created
- The question was also raised whether these bridging/extended programmes should take the form of true bridging programmes, i.e. programmes that lead to standard NCV studies or whether they should take the form of true extended programmes, i.e. entirely new 4-year NCV programmes that are equivalent to the current NCV L2-4 but that have unique progression and curricula – respondents deemed the former to be the best option, at least

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

Section 6: Statements from the DHET Green Paper on Post-School Education and Training

- o Various statements related to Access with Success were taken from the Green Paper and placed in the questionnaire
- o These statements tie in well with the above discussion of results and, in some cases, provide extra perspectives on the issues at hand.
- o The following slides contain all these statements, to which all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- (Green Paper, p20) A key first step in strengthening our colleges is to differentiate between the stronger and weaker institutions, in order to provide appropriate support and leadership to both. Autonomy for institutions may not achieve the desired goals if institutions do not have sufficient capacity to manage themselves.
- (Green Paper, p21) Key short-term steps to improve throughput rates will include lecturer training, particularly in subject expertise, and allowing colleges to select the students most likely to be successful while strengthening their ability to do so. In the long term, centrally designed admission test may be an important tool to ensure that only students with a reasonably good chance of success are admitted, and that bridging programmes are designed to assist where necessary.

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- (Green Paper, p21) Our vision is for colleges to primarily offer two types of qualifications: General vocational qualifications (the NCV L); and more focused occupational programmes in which they will primarily offer the theory components of both trade and non-trade programmes, (including apprenticeships and learner ships) as well as where necessary the practical training component of the particular qualification or award.

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- (Green Paper, p22-23) A successful review will need a clearer sense of the purpose and target group of this qualification. There are three potential options here:
 - Option one: The NCV L should be aimed primarily at students who have completed Grade. The curriculum may need to be simplified.
 - Option two: The NCV L should be aimed primarily at students who have completed Grade 12, with additional entrance requirements for specific programmes. The curriculum could be strengthened in certain areas.
 - Option three: Two types of NCV L programmes should be developed, an extended one aimed at Grade 9 learners, and a shorter one for those who already have a Matric qualification.
- The second and third options seem to make more sense than the first, given the very high failure rates at present, and given the limited opportunities available for learners who have Matric but who do not qualify for university entrance. The second option does not address the needs of Grade 9 learners who leave school. One solution may be to direct these learners to technical high schools, where they can finish their Matric, or even possibly undertake the three – year NCV L. Clearly, technical high schools must complement FET colleges, regardless of the options agreed on; however, they are beyond the scope of the DHET, and hence the Green Paper. Another possibility, particularly for young people over the age of 18, could be through the National Independent Certificate, and the National Senior Certificate of Adults (NASCA) – which could be offered in FET colleges and/or public and private adult learning centres.

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- (Green Paper, p23) A serious problem facing students who have completed the NCV L is that universities do not normally admit NCV L graduates, even if their marks are good, unless there is a specific agreement between a particular university and the FET College where the student completed their NCV L. This is another matter that the review of the NCV L must consider as it is unacceptable for any qualification to be a dead end which cannot lead to further qualifications.

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- (Green Paper, p24) Where colleges have relationships with universities and universities of technology, these should be supported, encouraged and systematised. As they grow their capacity, colleges can become sites of delivery of Higher Certificates, under the auspices of universities. Working with the universities, colleges could also offer bridging or foundational programmes to students who wish to enter university but who require upgrading in particular subjects, especially Maths, Science and Language.
- (Green Paper, p24) The Single greatest challenge in improving and expanding the colleges is the capacity of lecturers, particularly their subject – matter expertise.

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- (Green Paper, p25) Foundational and bridging programmes: Working with senior college staff and other experts, the DHET will develop the curriculum for foundational learning programmes for students who cannot meet the demands of college programmes. These could be linked to the National Senior Certificate for Adults, but the details need to be explored further. Bridging programmes will also be developed in key areas, to assist students to move into areas where there is high demand for skills in the economy, and into higher education where appropriate.

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- (Green Paper, p25) Student support services: Although there have been improvements over the last few years, there is currently still insufficient focus on providing support services for students in colleges.
- (Green Paper, p25) Financial support: In the main, colleges serve the most disadvantaged students. Further, given the national imperatives with regard to increasing artisanal and other mid-level skills, support for students is vital. The DHET will enable students to enrol in these institutions without having to pay large fees, and has already taken steps in this direction with the abolition of fees for those students who qualify for assistance from the NSFAS. As funding becomes available, DHET will progressively remove fees for all students in NCV L programmes. As of 2011 the NSFAS allocation for FET colleges has been increased from just under R400 million to approximately R1.2 billion for bursary in NCV L or N programmes.

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- (Green Paper, p26) Central to strengthening the colleges as institutions is improved information to support management decision making. In order to provide this, the DHET will substantially improve data collection and management at both national and college levels, especially in the following areas:
 - lecturer qualifications and competencies;
 - financial status of colleges;
 - student registration and assessment results;
 - infrastructure and equipment, to determine capacity to deliver programmes and sub-system growth;
 - student needs and support requirements;
 - Employer demand for vocational and occupational programmes.

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- (Green Paper, p27) The DHET's vision is that over the next twenty years we will dramatically increase the number of students enrolling in the FET colleges, to address the acute skills shortages of the economy and the learning needs of individuals. This includes students enrolled in the general vocational programmes (resulting in an NCV L), apprenticeship programmes, and in order occupational programmes. Some of these students will be full-time while others will be apprentices attending college for a few months a year or studying part-time on various short courses.

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RESULTS PER SECTION (CONTINUED)

- (Green Paper, p28) Strengthening and expanding our FET colleges must happen through efficient use of allocations from the fiscus, through sensible use of the levy-grant institutions budgets, and through creative partnerships with the private sector. Funding modalities should be focused on building strong institutions to enable responsiveness, quality and long-term sustainability.

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