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A FIRST IN 2007 AND AGAIN IN 2014... / ANOTHER FIRST FOR TRANSPORT ECONOMICS AND LOGISTICS



In front from left: Mr Frenk Monnagaaratwe (Junior Lecturer), Ms Abigail Mooketsi (Junior Lecturer) and Mr Arthur Mapanga (Lecturer). In the back from left: Mrs Karen Visser (Programme Manager), Mr Keletsamaile Motatsa (Lecturer) and Prof Kobus Cronjé (Associate Professor).

Absent: Mr Ofentse Mokwena (Junior Lecturer)

The success story of BCom Transport Economics and BCom Logistics Management started in 2003 when the National Department of Transport recruited Ms Karen Visser to start these programmes on the Mafikeng Campus. These programmes have attracted much interest from the very beginning and Karen and one other full-time staff member had their work cut out for them.

In 2007, these programmes were also the first programmes on the Mafikeng Campus to be subjected to an external programme evaluation (EPE). One of the main findings of the EPE panel was that the staff shortage needed to be addressed. The Mafikeng Campus management took the recommendations to heart and invested in the programme to such an extent that it is now one of the flagship programmes on the campus, with seven full-time staff members.

2011 saw a record number of almost 200 first-year students registering; student numbers have since stabilised at approximately 100 first-years per annum. The programmes underwent another external evaluation in October 2014 and became the first undergraduate programmes of the NWU overall to receive a general commendation. This subject group is still going from strength to strength under Karen's able guidance. Research output is increasing and honours programmes will start next year. The subject group expects great things for the future – watch this space!

Dear Reader,
This newsletter offers a brief perspective on the quality assurance of academic programmes and support departments at the NWU, so as to emphasise the responsibility of everyone within the context of academic and/or support services. Please send any questions and comments to Tommy Pietersen

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Ethical governance: Are universities behaving well?

The annual Association of Commonwealth Universities Strategic Management Programme took place at the end of August 2014 in Perth, Australia. The workshop focussed on three main topics - ethical governance, quality management and student support. Highlights of each of these topics will be included in the next three issues of Quality News.

The late **Prof Sir David Watson**, an assessor from the UK, discussed Ethical Governance, and structured his presentation around the notion of a "Hippocratic Oath" and the analysis of chapter seven from his book, *The Question of Conscience: Higher education and personal responsibility*. Sir David highlighted that universities are often viewed as 'ethical beacons' that will lead the way on issues of right and wrong and what constitutes ethical behaviour. However, in recent times this view might be changing along with the deterioration of the reputations of universities' as beacons of probity and virtue. Universities are constantly under political and economic pressure and therefore challenged to behave ethically and to know when they are 'behaving badly'. Sir David provided the following 'Ten Commandments for Higher Education' to guide universities towards what they should be striving for to achieve ethical governance. He also pointed out dilemmas arising from each of these commandments:

1) From the commandment of "Strive to tell the truth" the dilemma of "Autonomy"

arises. Universities face a constant struggle for academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Factors such as funding can have an impact on this autonomy and their perceived primary purpose of discovering the truth.

2) From the commandment of "Take care in establishing the truth" the dilemma of "Advocacy" arises. As universities push advocacy and how they can sell or promote a new idea, course or discovery, they jeopardise the disciplined and thorough approach needed to take the appropriate care and time to establish the truth.

3) From the commandment of "Be fair" the dilemma of "Attitude" arises. Attitude refers to a university's attitude towards equality of opportunity, non-discrimination, affirmative action and respect for others. In addition to collegiality and civility, these characteristics are seen to be at the heart of a university. Universities seek to mitigate inappropriate attitudes through behavioural codes and protocols.

4) From the commandment of "Always be ready to explain" the dilemma of "Accountability" arises. While a university must always be ready to provide explanations and expertise, issues can arise when the views of individual university employees who are not regarded as experts, are expressed as such in the outside world. Most universities have lists of subject specialists or experts available to address specific media enquiries, but it is

Strategic Management Programme Perth Western Australia August 2014



important to address the accountability of each expert, since there are inherent risks and responsibilities when presenting a specific view or opinion on a particular issue.

5) From the commandment of "Do no harm" the dilemma of "Anticipation" arises. In aiming to do no harm, universities are attempting to anticipate problems or risk and to take mitigating actions. These universities become adverse to risk and in doing so become closed off rather than open.

6) From the commandment of "Keep your promises" the dilemma of "Advertising" arises. The question here is whether universities always deliver what they say they will deliver through the marketing and promotional material they use.

7) From the commandment of "Respect your colleagues, and especially your opponents" the dilemma of "The arms race" arises. Even though higher education is a hugely competitive environment, it still operates with a combination of competition and collaboration. Your goal is not to drive out your opponent (as might be the case in the classic marketplace), but to get ahead by listening, absorbing and working with your competition.

8) From the commandment of "Sustain the community" the dilemma of "Ambience/ Atmosphere" arises. While universities are institutions, they are not exclusively defined by

their own characteristics – they are also part of higher education at large. It is a global enterprise with a global community and the work of a university in sustaining the community is much wider in the modern world.

9) With regard to the 9th commandment of "Guard your treasure" the importance of access to university 'treasure' and how access is provided was highlighted

10) From the commandment of "Never be satisfied" the dilemma of "Asymptosis" arises. This commandment poses the biggest challenge by demanding continuous improvement within universities. A requirement to be always moving forward leads to a pressurised environment.



IN BUSINESS MATHEMATICS AND INFORMATICS COMMENDED ONCE AGAIN

In August 2014, the four MSc programmes in Business Mathematics and Informatics in the Centre for Business Mathematics and Informatics (BMI) on the Potchefstroom Campus were once again evaluated by an external panel. This evaluation was a follow-up on a previous external evaluation in 2008 during which the programme received a commendation. The external panel included members of Dutch and British universities, one member from Nigeria from an international professional body, Professional Risk Managers' International Association (PRIMA), as well as members of South African universities and the industry.

The Centre for BMI came into being 17 years ago, in 1998, as a partnership between the University and ABSA. The Free University of Amsterdam's established programme in BMI served as a point of departure for the Centre. The Centre has since developed an own character and liaises with several national and international institutions. Several partnerships have also been entered into with the industry.

During the three-day evaluation process the panel visited several sites. During a visit to the Faculty of Natural Sciences where the Centre and its programmes are situated, the Director, Prof Riaan de Jongh, and the Dean, Prof Kobus Pienaar, assured the panel of the Centre's current successes and its long-term sustainability. Apart from the ordinary evaluation criteria, the external panel was asked to pay special attention to the focus and direction of the Centre seen within the national and international context; liaison with the industry and academic institutions; sensitivity for new trends; the continued suitability of the training for the needs of the industry; the

industry's level of satisfaction with project work; and the Centre's management structure in the current context. The evaluation panel also paid a visit to the Barclays Head Office in Johannesburg. This gave the evaluators an opportunity to see first-hand how the project work with a view to an MSc mini-dissertation is carried out within the industry. The panel commended the quality and relevance of this facet of the training, and specifically of the thorough process to ensure good supervision and progress.

The panel commended four of BMI's MSc degrees in Business Mathematics and Informatics in eight of the 11 evaluation categories, and awarded a general commendation*. The panel was impressed by the Centre and the wonderful work that is being done to equip young people with the skills that are necessary for the South African industry. The panel also made a number of valuable recommendations, inter alia that the Centre should market the programme in other African countries.

Following the evaluation, the Kenya School for Monetary Studies approached the Centre and started negotiations to enrol some of their students in one of the MSc programmes and to offer the programme on a distance basis in collaboration with the Centre.

* A commendation is the highest evaluation, followed by the "meets minimum standards" evaluation, and the "must improve" evaluation.



A QUALITY MEETING FOR MANAGERS AND COORDINATORS

From left: Mr Johan Erasmus (Campus Quality Coordinator: Potchefstroom Campus – Support Departments), Mr Schalk Fredericks (Campus Quality Coordinator: Potchefstroom Campus – Academic Programmes), Ms Johanna Müller (Quality Manager: Support Departments), Ms Antoinette Vermeulen (Quality Manager: Academic Programmes), Ms Manuela Fernandes Martins (Campus Quality Coordinator: Vaal Triangle Campus – Support and Academic) and Dr Eva Manyedi (Campus Quality Coordinator: Mafikeng Campus – Support and Academic).

On Wednesday, 4 February 2015, Ms Antoinette Vermeulen and Ms Johanna Müller, managers in the Institutional Quality Office, met with the quality coordinators of the three campuses.

During their meeting, the two newly appointed quality coordinators, Mr Johan Erasmus (Potchefstroom Campus) and Ms Manuela Fernandes-Martins (Vaal Triangle Campus), were introduced to everybody. The respective campuses' quality planning for 2015 was

considered and quality matters were discussed and synchronised. This valuable liaison also offered an opportunity to strengthen the ties between the quality coordinators and with members of the Institutional Quality Office.

This meeting once again placed the spotlight on the essential and important role played by the quality coordinators on the campuses – quality colleagues that assure the NWU's outstanding quality.

GARMIN GROUP

SHOWS THE WAY!

It is our shared task to make sure that our departments stay on the right track...

It is for this purpose that the Quality Office has been part of a discussion group, the so-called Garmin group, that was formed in 2011. This group consists of representatives from quality offices from all South African universities that wish to participate.

The aim of this discussion group is to exchange information and perspectives and to talk about practices, approaches, results and problems. The Quality Office did presentations about, inter alia:

1. The practice of soft reviews (Ms Johanna Müller) and;
2. "Towards Enhancing Quality Practice – Short Courses – a Reality Check" (Dr Jannie Jacobsz)

Such a forum takes place in an informal and



Members of the Garmin group listen intently to a presentation on "the long and the short" of short courses at universities.

spontaneous atmosphere and includes voluntary presentations, discussions and traditionally also a surprise outing.

We work, think, reason, plan, laugh, eat... and afterwards everyone is filled with new inspiration for our task of quality assurance.

This year's event was organised by the University of Limpopo, which focused on short courses and report writing. Die event was concluded with a sunset game drive – WITHOUT a Garmin!

QUALITY MANAGER VISITS THE VAAL TRIANGLE CAMPUS

On 10 February 2015 Ms Johanna Müller, Quality Manager: Support Departments from the Institutional Quality Office, met with colleagues responsible for driving and/or coordinating quality-related activities and or actions within support departments as part of her visit to the Vaal Triangle Campus.

During the meeting she briefed and discussed the status document for support departments with Prof Linda du Plessis, Vice-Rector: Academic, Quality and Planning and Ms Manuela Fernandes-Martins, the campus quality coordinator.*

In terms of the quality actions for 2015, she also invited colleagues to update their Quality Manuals by using the updated template that now also includes a section on risk management. Johanna also introduced the new self-reflective questionnaire that support departments who are undertaking self-evaluation, need to complete in preparation for the Soft Review. (A Soft Review refers to a one to two-day open discussion between peers, on the basis of certain criteria and existing evidence documentation.)

"It is important that a support department undergoes a Soft Review regularly, as the purpose thereof is to provide

information and evidence of the quality of the services and/or products that a department provides," says Johanna.

In support of the 2015 quality drive at the NWU, the following support departments at the Vaal Triangle Campus will be participating in a soft review: Operational Management: Residences (April 2015), Marketing and Communication (June 2015), Academic Administration: International Office (June 2015), and the Centre for Continuing Professional Development (CCPD) (July 2015).

For more information and relevant documentation, please visit the staff intranet > Quality: Support Departments, or click [here](#).

*Ms Daleen Gerber, the former campus quality coordinator, and recently appointed director of the School of Information Technology, was instrumental in the coordination of quality-related actions on the campus from 2006 to 2014.

