

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.

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CONTENT

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Much is happening with regard to quality assurance at the NWU. Many programme evaluations will take place this year, as well as internal programme evaluations of among others the BEd Hons programme (Learner Support and Education Management, Law and Systems) that will be done across the three campuses. The purpose of internal



Dr Jannie Jacobsz

number of external programme evaluations also take place on the Mafikeng and Potchef-stroom campuses.

The qualification and programme submissions that form part of the Higher Education Qualification Sub-Framework (HEQSF), are still in process and as part of this a selection of qualifications/programmes will be subjected to a desk-top review (paper review). Only their "design" will be appraised by experts from outside the NWU.

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programme evaluations of aligned programmes is, among others, to determine the effectiveness of programme alignment across campuses. A num-

Quite a number of support departments are in the process of updating their quality manuals, while some departments are undergoing a mini review (soft review) this year.

The IT departments on all three campuses as well as in the Institutional Office will undergo a peer review, with experts from as far afield as the USA participating as panel members.

In this newsletter, processes and the documentation and measuring thereof, are highlighted. Have a look at the other reports about this as well.

Process design, measurement and quality

Maarten Venter
and Jannie Jacobsz

In 1902, Rudyard Kipling wrote the following in his book *Just so Stories*, in the chapter “The Elephant’s Child”:

“I keep six honest serving-men: (They taught me all I knew)/ Their names are What and Where and When/ and How and Why and Who”.

These “names” can be directly linked to quality and the measurement thereof.

There are four standard measurement scales: Nominal measurement (six girls; eight boys); Ordinal measurement (A is first; B

second; C third; but A and B differ by one point, and B and C by 22 points); Interval measurement (25° Celsius is 5° above 20°

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Celsius, and 45° Celsius is 5° above 40° Celsius; but 40° Celsius is not twice as hot as 20° Celsius because 0° Celsius does not imply “no temperature”), and Ratio measurement (D obtained 70 points in the

test; twice as much as E who had 35 – zero points imply “no points”). All these scales are valid measurement scales.

The university manages its activities by ensuring that such activities happen within designed processes that are measurable. Well-designed processes will deliver on the goal and will be efficient. However, we are all aware that the environment changes continuously, staff and their skills change continuously, technology changes continuously. We therefore need to accept that process review, redesign and improvement is a continuous managerial activity within the NWU environment.

It might be asked, “but why measurement?” The answer to this is embedded in the following questions: Do we progress towards our (NWU, campus, faculty, school, subject group, programme group) agreed-upon goals? The degree of goal-attainment is known as Effectiveness. We also need to answer questions of the following type, which point towards Efficiency, namely: are we

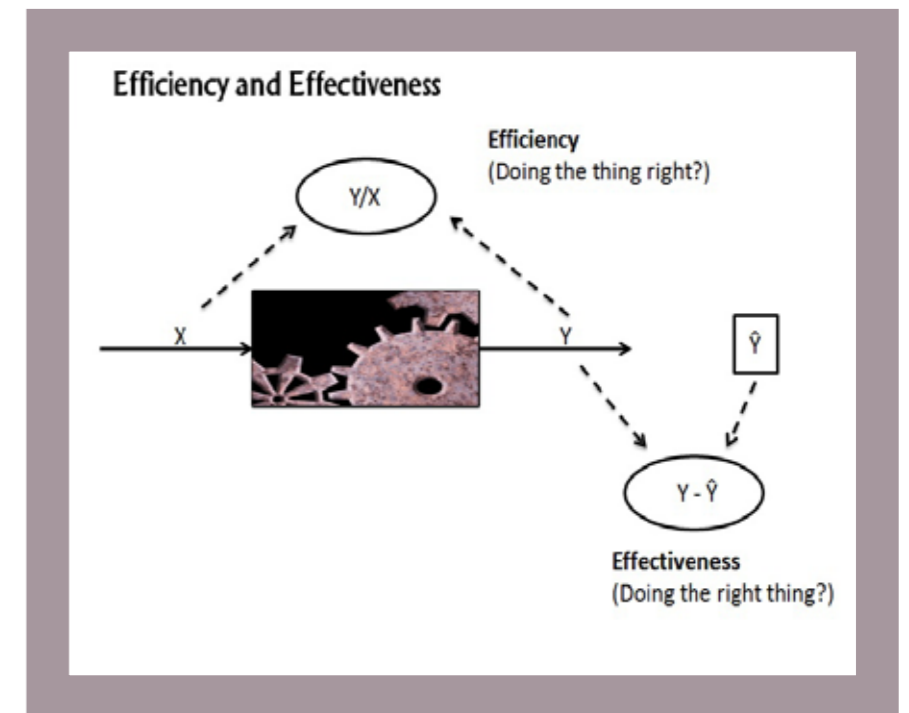
progressing fast enough?; can we afford the pace?; is our per capita output improving?; and, what resource conversions are we bad at?

Measurement serves at least two purposes, namely to inform and to steer. It was the scientist Lord Kelvin who said, “When you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meagre and unsatisfactory kind; it may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely in your thoughts advanced to the stage of science”.

Measurement is not behaviour independent. It influences both the measurer and measured. One has to be aware of

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the psychology initiated through measuring. As Dr Deming said: “A numerical goal without a method is nonsense,” and “Where there is fear, you do not get honest figures.” Its purpose in the NWU is “to in-



form”, i.e. to allow the measurer to form a model or hypothesis of a complex situation to aid decision making, or “to steer”, i.e. to guide towards our long-term goal. As general employees and specifically as managers, we should test our intent, both when measuring and also when not measuring. One can only not measure explicitly.

Dr Deming also said: “The numerical target puts the focus on the number itself and not on improving the process. If your organisation wastes efforts focused on the differences between numbers and goals, that is a sign of failure. If focused on the process it is better.” Thus a measurement inclination is a means to an end. Measurement may never become the end in itself. A scoreboard gives only one dimension of how

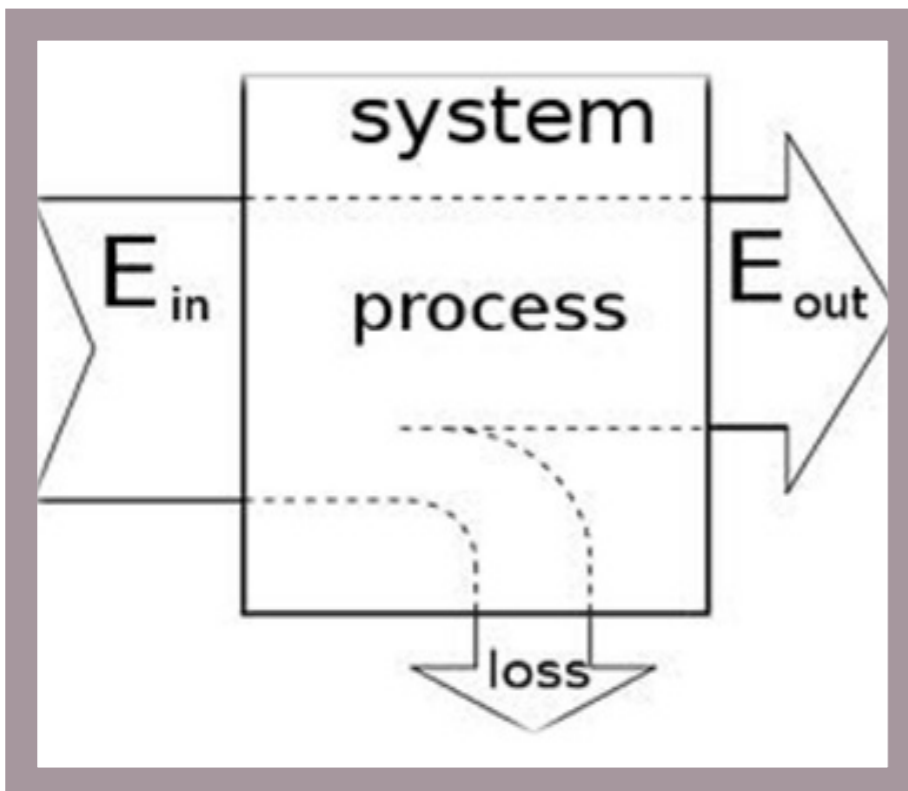
well we do our job. The qualitative side is equally important.

The Quality Policy of the NWU clearly indicates that each faculty and each support department should have a quality manual.

In this manual the main processes should be clearly documented, as well as how efficiency and effectiveness are determined. Several support departments and faculties across the NWU have already actively engaged in this initiative, with many positive results.

The Institutional Quality Office is there to assist you, should you need our support.

(Also see other articles in this newsletter related to the progress made in academic and support departments across the NWU.)



PROGRESS

IS BEING MADE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF FACULTY QUALITY MANUALS

Antoinette Vermeulen

Several training and consultation sessions have been conducted at campuses and at a number of specific faculties (on request) in order to assist them with the documentation of their core business processes and the quality assurance thereof. All 15 faculties across the NWU intend to table their quality manuals for discussion and input at the respective faculty board meetings during the course of 2013. The

objective is that all faculty quality manuals should be accepted and approved by the respective faculty boards by March 2014. The active involvement of the respective quality coordinators or managers and vice-rectors is acknowledged and appreciated.

Progress has been made at the Mafikeng Campus and all five faculties had developed a first draft by the end of 2012. These drafts were screened and comments and general feedback were provided that could be considered in order to improve these valuable documents. The second drafts are due for submission by the end of September 2013. Focused training sessions were conducted for the faculties of Commerce and Administration, Human and Social Sciences, and Law.

At the Potchefstroom Campus things also progressed well. The faculties of Education and Natural Sciences had completed the development of their respective quality manuals by the end of 2012.

The faculties of Theology and Law already have quality manuals and are in the process of making changes based on the recommended format. The faculties of Health Sciences and Economic and Management Sciences have started with the development of quality manuals, of which some sections have been completed.

The Faculty of Engineering established a working group that attends to the development of their quality manual. The Faculty of Arts has discussed the development of a quality manual at the faculty management meeting. Additional consultations were conducted for the faculties of Law, Economic and Management Sciences, Theology and Engineering.

At the Vaal Triangle Campus information sessions were conducted and these were followed by individual discussions with faculty staff members. The first drafts will be made available by the end of August 2013.

All faculties and staff members involved are thanked for their willingness and active participation in this initiative. The fruits of all this work will become evident in the increased efficiency of faculty processes. Here are a few colleagues which are already actively part of the process:



From left to right:

Ms D Gerber (Vaal Triangle Campus), Prof MLM Mbaob (Mafikeng Campus), Prof S Swanepoel (Mafikeng Campus), Prof PA Botha (Mafikeng Campus), Prof J Geertsema (Potchefstroom Campus) and Prof F Janse van Rensburg (Potchefstroom Campus).

Soft reviews

a new option for quality assurance of support departments

Johanna Müller

Soft reviews are a new, more cost-effective and timesaving type of evaluation for support departments, and have been implemented in 2012.

With this new approach and method, basically the same amount of data is generated as in the case

of a complete peer evaluation.

A soft review involves a visit of a few hours to a support department, during which the work and activities of such a department is appraised against certain criteria. Together with the director and the man-

ager of the Quality Office, one or two experts in the relevant area of work are also involved in the visit.

Eventually a brief report is compiled by the Quality Office and sent to the department and the line manager.

Departments that had already undergone a soft review in 2012:



During the soft review at the library on the Mafikeng Campus.



During the soft review at the library on the Vaal Triangle Campus.

The following departments are planning to do a soft review in 2013:

Institutional Office

Community Engagement
29 August

Student Administrative systems
29 October

Mafikeng Campus

Centre for Business and Management Development
18 July

Financial Student Support
22 October

Marketing and Communication
3 September