

## Quality newsletter

YEAR 9 NO 1

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#### 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 (tommy.pietersen@nwu.ac.za)

## "Life is tough... but I'm tougher!"

On Friday 6 November 2015, the Institutional Quality Office hosted their fourth annual INDABA on the Potchefstroom Campus for colleagues from the support departments.

#### Dr D knows her stuff

The speaker for the event was the well-known clinical and social psychologist, Ms Dorianne Weil ("Dr D"). Her presentation brought cheer to the end of a busy year and provided inspiration for 2016.

The Indaba was a great success and, judging from the feedback we received, there had been significant need for such an event. Everyone faces problems and challenges at some point and it is a great blessing to have colleagues on hand who are always at the ready with innovative solutions and support. The success of this Indaba once again emphasised the value of team-building efforts.

**Long live the INDABA!!**

# Evaluation of aligned programmes continues

In 2015 the Institutional Quality Office laboured forth in their quality assurance of aligned programmes. This process had kicked off in 2014 with BEdHons: Learner support. The following aligned programmes were also placed under scrutiny:

## **BSc in Information Technology**

The BSc in Information Technology programme was evaluated by four panel peers from 10 to 12 June 2015. This aligned programme is presented on the Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle Campuses. Prof Rossouw von Solms of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) was the chairperson and Prof Andre Basden of the Salford University in Britain served on the panel as international expert. Other panel members were Prof Irwin Brown of the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Mr Louw Labuschagne of CS Interactive

Training. The panel visited both campuses and provided positive feedback. Staff members were complimented on their commitment to the students and their active efforts to improve alignment across the campuses. The panel proposed that an advisory committee be convened from the industry to advise both campuses in terms of, e.g., the design of the programme.

## **BEdHons Curriculum Studies**

The following panel evaluated the aligned BEdHons programme in Curriculum Studies from 9 to 12 November 2015: Prof Lesley le Grange (panel chair: US), Prof Geesje van den Berg (Unisa), Dr Thabo Msibi (UKZN), and Prof Hester Geyser, (UJ). The programme is presented on the Potchefstroom and Vaal Triangle Campuses and the panel visited both sites. The panel concluded that both campuses had very good infrastructure and recommended that the programme's module composition and some of the content be re-evaluated.



*From left is Prof Irwin Brown (UK), Prof Rossouw von Solms (Panel chair, NMMU), Dr Sonja Gilliland (Subject chair: NWU), Prof Andrew Basden (Salford University in Britain), and Mr Louw Labuschagne (CS Interactive Training).*



*From left is Prof Hester Geyser (UJ), Dr Thabo Msibi (UKZN), Prof Geesje van den Berg (Unisa) and Prof Lesley Le Grange (Chair, US).*

# The Unit for Open Distance Learning has been weighed ...

This significant unit underwent a comprehensive external evaluation of more than a week in August 2015.

Although distance learning programmes at the NWU have been evaluated numerous times in the past, the unit decided to undergo yet another evaluation by experts from

across the world.

The panel consisted of six international experts and three members from South African universities:



At the back, from left, is **Dr Steven Hutchinson** (Associate Dean: Learning and Teaching, Faculty of Education and Language Studies, Open University, Milton Keynes, UK), **Mr Seamus Fox** (Head: Open Education, National Institute for Digital Learning, Dublin City University, Ireland), **Dr Johan Hendrikz** (Manager: Unit for Distance Education, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria), **Dr Piet Henderikx** (Former Secretary General and Advisor: European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)) (Chairperson), and **Dr Santiago Acosta-Aide** (Vice-Rector: Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja, Ecuador).

In front, from the left: **Prof Wendy Kilfoil** (Director: Department for Education Innovation, University of Pretoria), **Ms Robyn Arnold** (Scribe), **Prof Daniella Coetzee** (Principal: South Campus, University of the Free State), **Dr Jessica Aguti** (Education Specialist: Teacher Education, Commonwealth of Learning), and **Prof Walter Lumadi** (Chairperson: Higher degrees, Curriculum Studies: UNISA).

## The focus

The panel was asked to focus on two questions:

1. How effective and efficient are the UODL processes in delivering programmes to ODL students in terms of the stated evaluation criteria? and
2. Does the NWU have a suitable framework to support its ODL provision?

## And the outcome is...

The panel of experts compiled a comprehensive report finding that, in general, the UODL with all its sections is a delivery centre of quality that executes its functions on a very professional level at all times.

**... that they are indeed heavy-weights who possess keen insight!**

# Soft Reviews for 2015

The following six support departments of the NWU underwent soft reviews in the previous year:

1. Residences – VTC
2. Marketing & Communication – VTC
3. Internationalisation – IO and campuses (combined)
4. Centre for Continuous Professional Development – VTC
5. Protection Services – MC
6. Quality Office – IO



The following brief remarks should therefore be regarded as extremely cursory and would necessitate some further unpacking and deliberation – particularly in respect of the concrete aspects of a “transformed curriculum”. These ideas are an attempt to provide a theoretical description of the concept and, as such, do not necessarily address the practical issues related to the process.

Prior to concrete curriculum design and/or development actions, the NWU needs to consider, among others, the following:

- Although some of the abovementioned elements may already be in place, a commitment to transformative learning within a Teaching-Learning Strategy also implies a commitment to realise it within the curricula offered at the university.

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