CHE

COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Quality Enhancement Project

Analysis of the Institutional Submissions from Private Higher Education Institutions for Phase 1 of the Quality Enhancement Project

July 2015

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

From 2004 to 2011 the CHE carried out comprehensive institutional audits of the quality assurance systems of all public and 11 private higher education institutions (HEIs) in South Africa. This was the first time that such external audits had been conducted across higher education institutions in a single cycle in South Africa. The intention was to bring the institutions up to an acceptable level in terms of quality in their core functions and in their internal quality assurance processes. After going through one cycle of audits, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) deliberated on whether or not to carry out a second cycle of audits immediately. Following a review of the HEQC and extended consultations with the higher education sector, the HEQC decided that rather than embark on a second cycle of audits, the more pressing need, as revealed in the audits, was to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the higher education sector. This decision was supported by statistics produced by the CHE (2013) that show that throughput rates in higher education in South Africa are low and are not improving, even though the participation rate of 20-24 year olds is low, ranging between 17% and 19%.

In 2013 various consultations and awareness-raising activities were undertaken with over 1000 stake-holders in order to formulate a national project to improve student success in higher education. The resulting project is called the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP). It was formally launched in February 2014. In the QEP student success is defined as:

> Enhanced student learning with a view to increasing the number of graduates with attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable (CHE 2014).

Given the need to improve student success across the whole higher education system, the QEP makes use of a system-wide approach. This means working with all institutions simultaneously rather than sequentially, as was done in the first audit cycle. As the QEP is unlike any national initiative ever undertaken in South Africa, it was decided that the process followed in the QEP should be inductive. This would enable the results of one part of the process to inform and shape the next part. A broad set of steps was outlined when the project began in 2014, but details of each step of the process are being developed as the process unfolds. The QEP process is also iterative in that it comprises two phases: Phase 1 runs from 2014 to 2015, and Phase 2 will run from 2016 to 2017. In each phase of the QEP all HEIs engage with specific focus areas that affect student success in order to identify good practices and find solutions to common challenges. For Phase 1 the focus areas are:

1. Enhancing academics as teachers
2. Enhancing student support and development
3. Enhancing the learning environment
4. Enhancing course and programme enrolment management

Figure 1.1 provides a diagrammatic representation of the flow of activities for each of the QEP's two phases. Red blocks indicate institutional activities; yellow blocks indicate centrally coordinated activities. The focus areas for Phase 1, listed above, were selected in 2013 (for a rationale see CHE, 2014).
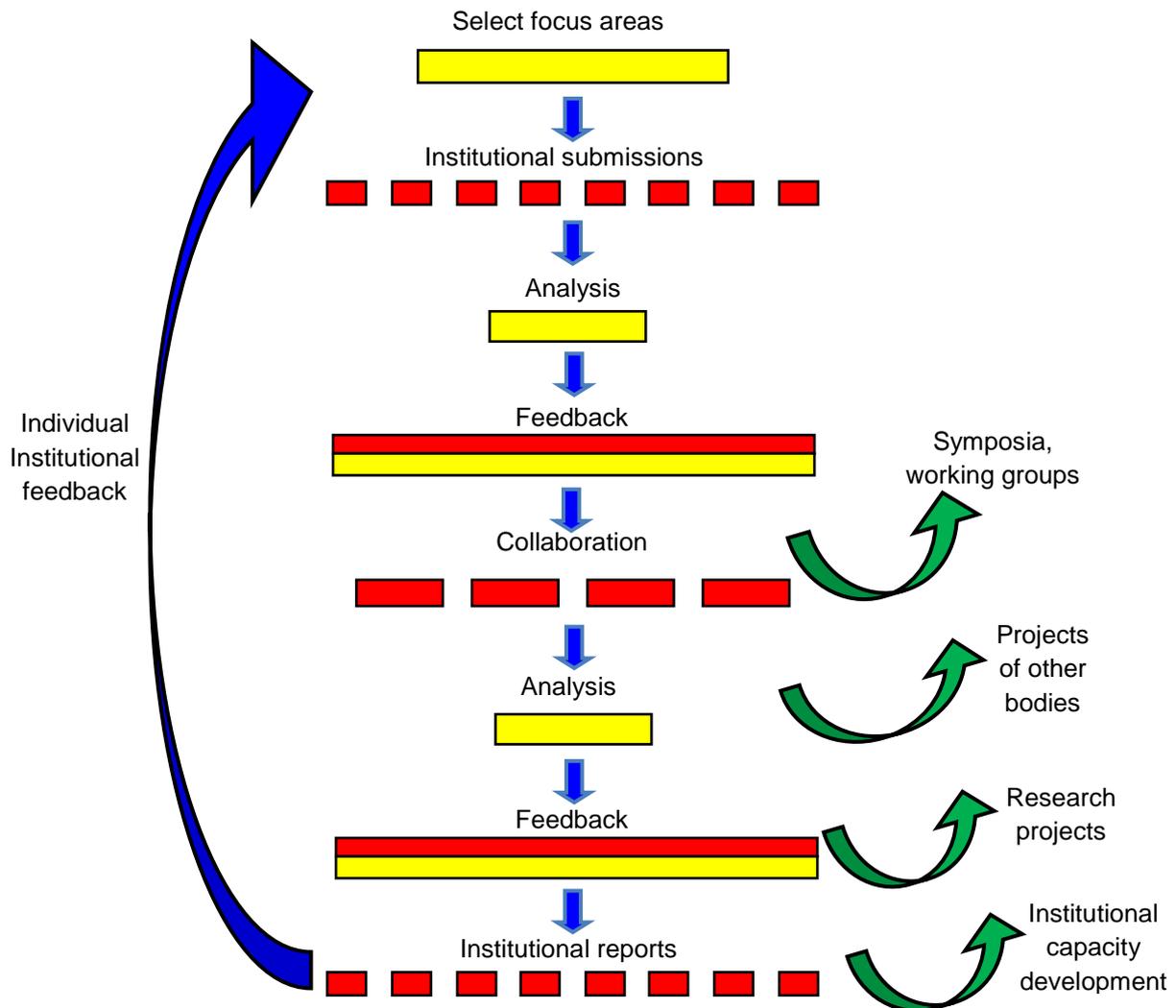
Figure 1.1: Flow diagram of the QEP for each phase.

While the overall process is similar for both public and private HEIs, the detailed process differs. The private HEI sub-sector differs in several important ways from the public sub-sector: the number of institutions is far greater, many of the institutions are small, many institutions provide narrowly-focused qualifications and private institutions do not receive government funding and therefore are not affected by certain government requirements, such as meeting enrolment targets.

In order to guide the QEP process for the private HEIs a working group was constituted comprising five representatives from each of the two large private provider networks, together with CHE staff. This group decided that for private providers, institutional

submissions would be voluntary and submitted on-line. Institutions that chose to participate would be invited to QEP workshops at which they would have the opportunity to interact with other private providers on issues related to the QEP focus areas. The purpose of the institutional submissions was to obtain baseline information on what institutions were doing that they regarded as successful and not successful, as well as challenges related to the four QEP focus areas. The questionnaire is in the Appendix. Private HEIs will not submit institutional reports or receive individual institutional feedback. However, it is envisaged that engagement with the QEP should contribute to the quality of private HEIs' submissions for accreditation and re-accreditation of their programmes.

All 120 private HEIs that were registered or provisionally registered were invited to complete the on-line submission form. Two opportunities were given, the first one ending on 30 June 2014 and the second one ending on 31 January 2015. Of the 120 institutions that were invited, 69 (58%) completed the submission.

An inductive analysis of the submissions was carried out in which descriptive categories were generated that encapsulate the issues identified in the submissions. The results of the analysis are presented in the sections that follow. A content analysis was also carried out for the public HEIs' submissions (CHE, 2015).

2. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

NATURE OF THE INSTITUTIONS

In questions 1 to 4 institutions were asked about the size and nature of their institution. Figure 2.1 indicates that the majority of the 69 institutions have a student population of less than 500.
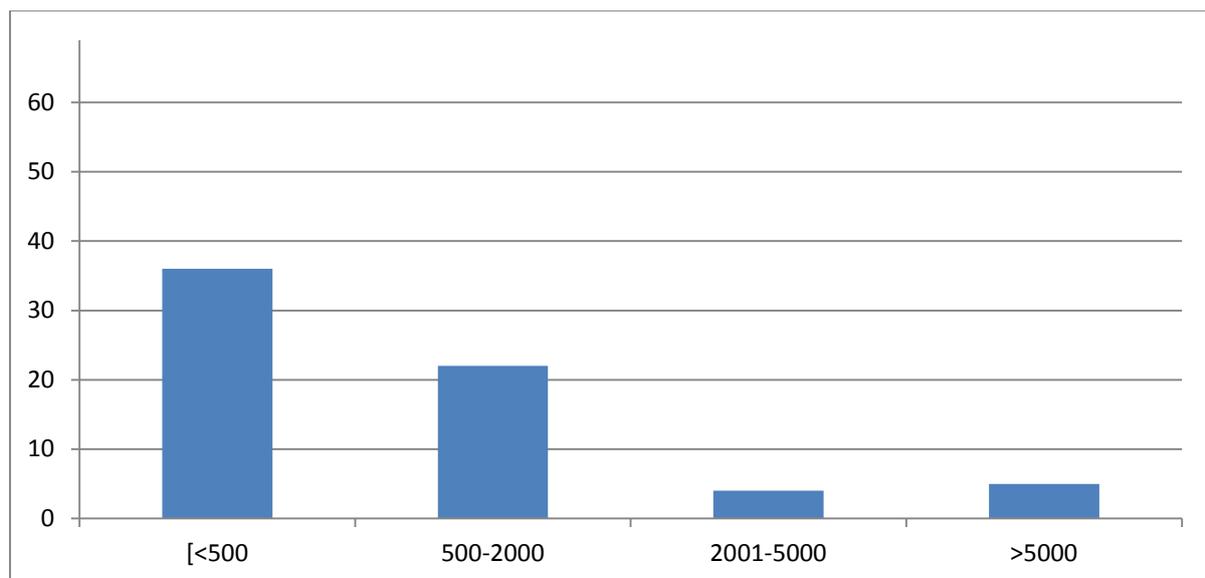
Figure 2.1: Number of students at participating institutions

A majority of institutions indicated that they use a contact mode of delivery. A few institutions mentioned that they use mixed mode of delivery while a small number only offer distance learning. This is represented in figure 2.2 below:
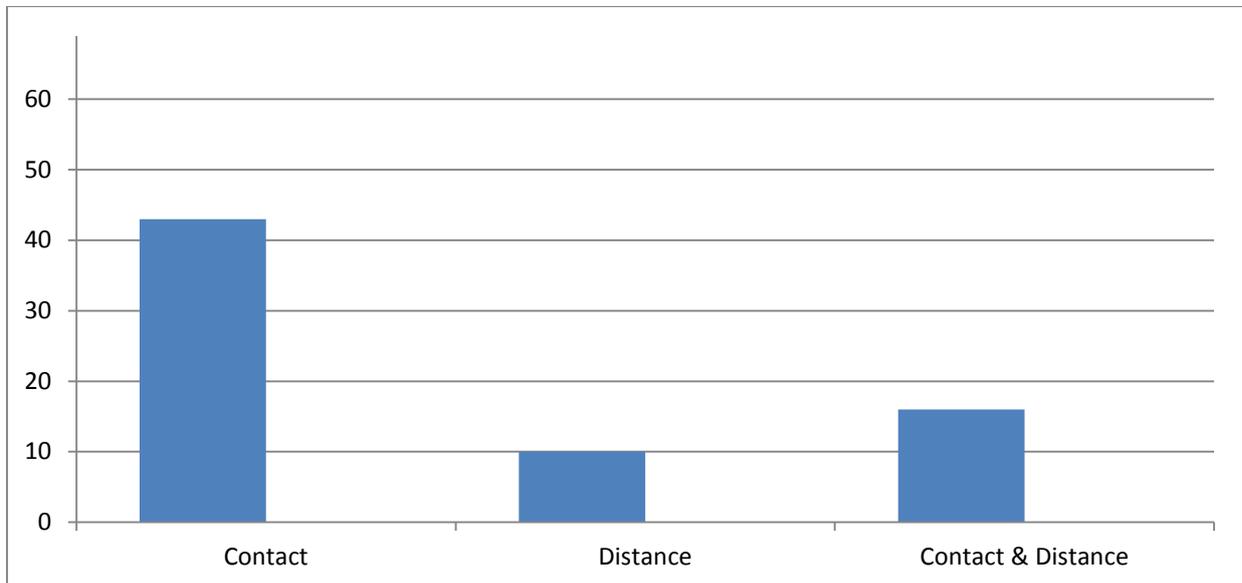
Figure 2.2: Mode of delivery

Forty-eight of the institutions were for profit and 21 were non-profit. The majority of the institutions have a narrow focus, with several related programmes. Figure 2.3 indicates the nature of programmes across institutions.
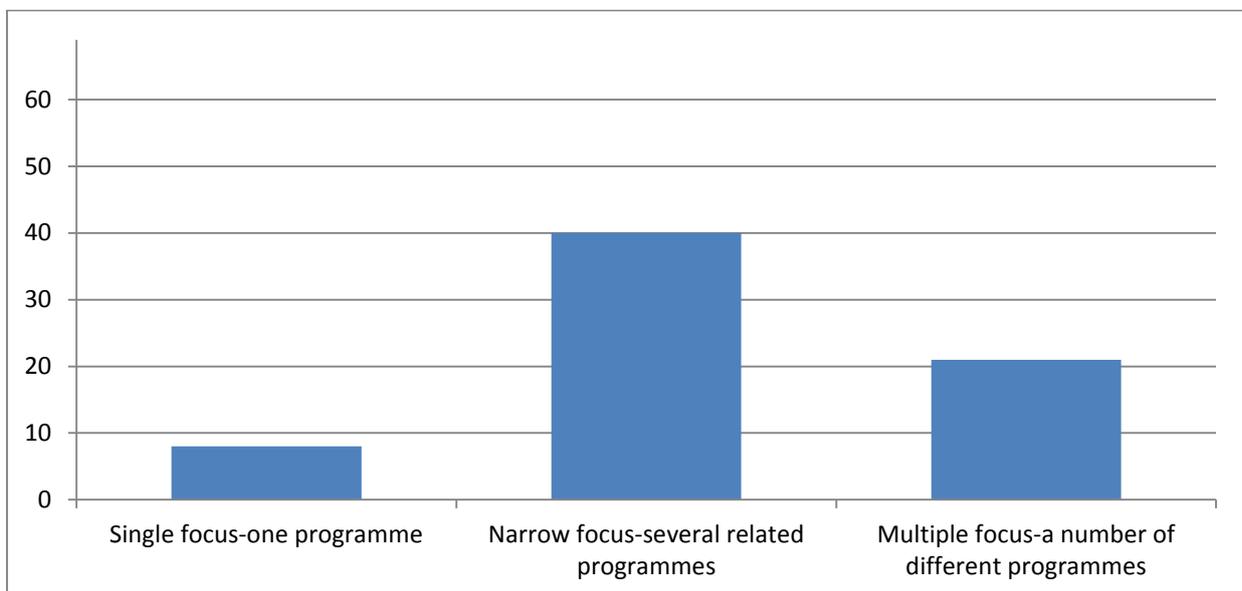
Figure 2.3: Nature of programme offerings

SALIENT ASPECTS OF INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT THAT AFFECT STUDENT SUCCESS

Institutions were asked to comment on aspects of their institutional context that are particularly noteworthy, challenging or salient in relation to student success, both positive and negative.

As far as what institutions perceived as supporting student success is concerned, 22 institutions indicated that the opportunities for authentic learning or work integrated learning that they provide to prepare students for the workplace contribute to success. The availability of student support services that focus on the development of academic literacy and skills was reported by 21 institutions as contributing to student success. Fourteen institutions mentioned that their current lecturer to student ratio enables lecturers to engage with students in a manner that enhances the teaching and learning process. A few (9) institutions referred to effective tracking systems that allow monitoring of students' performance and identification of at-risk students for the purposes of early intervention as another positive aspect that contributes to student success.

Eight institutions made mention of adequate infrastructure and resources to support teaching and learning activities, mature students that are self-motivated and the good reputation of the institutions (linked to possibilities of job placements) as factors contributing to student success. One institution mentioned that it offers opportunities for students who do not meet the minimum entry requirements to enrol in bridging programmes that will assist the students to meet the requirements of relevant programmes. Another institution mentioned that it uses institutional research to establish how well students are doing and the research shows that students are being successful in their programmes. Engaging in partnerships across institutions (exchange programmes with international institutions) was another positive aspect mentioned by one institution as contributing to student success.

As far as aspects considered as hampering student success across institutions are concerned, the low standard of students' competencies in numeracy and language, as well as thinking skills, was a major issue. Financially, lack of funding for students, which leads to a number of students defaulting on paying tuition fees greatly impacts on student success. Workload challenges, such as the impact of administrative work on staff workload and how this affects engagement time with students, is another issue mentioned by some institutions. In institutions that have students who are also working adults, balancing educational demands, demands from employers and family commitments pose a major challenge. The influence of external factors such as the delivery of learning materials, especially for distance learning institutions, was mentioned by one institution as especially challenging.

3. FOCUS AREA 1: ENHANCING ACADEMICS AS TEACHERS

Requirements and opportunities that institutions have for developing permanent academic staff as teachers

A number of institutions (15) mentioned that they had induction or orientation programmes for permanent academic staff that covered different aspects of teaching and learning. A few (4) institutions indicated that they also have staff development policies in place. However, the institutions did not explicitly indicate how these policies are used to support the development of academics as teachers. Two institutions mentioned that there were no formal requirements for academics to have any training as teachers. In terms of opportunities that institutions have for developing permanent academic staff as teachers, many institutions (59) mentioned that staff members are encouraged to attend internal and external workshops (courses, seminars, and training) focused on teaching and learning, assessment and curriculum. Some institutions (13) mentioned that junior staff were paired with more experienced senior staff as part of mentoring programmes. A few institutions (9) mentioned that their staff were engaged in peer learning, both formally and informally, focusing on topics such as pedagogy, assessment and classroom management.

It is worth mentioning that a number of institutions provided information on opportunities for the development of academics that did not necessarily target teaching skills. For example, a number of institutions (24) mentioned that their staff are encouraged to engage in scholarly activities such as research, writing papers for journal publications and presenting papers at conferences. Institutions (23) also mentioned that they acknowledged, motivated and funded staff who were engaged in, or wanted to, further their qualifications. Nine institutions mentioned that they provide support structures and resources, such as research and leadership support.

Requirements and opportunities that institutions have for developing temporary (non-permanent) academic staff as teachers

A few institutions (17) mentioned that they have requirements and opportunities for developing temporary academics staff as teachers, which range from in-house training, workshops, courses and meetings to ongoing support focused on assessment, teaching skills, and teaching technologies. Sixteen institutions stated that they have the same requirements and opportunities for both temporary and permanent staff. A few institutions (19) indicated that they do not employ temporary staff.

Model for calculating academics' workload

In response to the question in which institutions were asked if they have a model for calculating academics' workload that is applied consistently across the institution, 53 answered yes. Many institutions (41) mentioned that the number of hours for face-to-face teaching (includes supervision of projects) was included in their workload models. Thirty-eight institutions stated that administrative activities, such as participation in meetings, committees, QA activities and other teaching-related administrative work, were included in

their workload models. Thirty-six institutions mentioned that involvement with assessment and moderation activities (both internal and external) was also considered in their workload model. Thirty-three institutions indicated that time spent on preparing for class activities, tutorials, practicals and assessment were also included in workload models.

Four institutions mentioned that they did not have formal workload models. In these institutions the workload was determined by factors such as course lecture hours and classroom facilitation. Two institutions reported that their workload models were informally determined by considering the staff's teaching hours, hours needed for preparation and marking, research, meetings and general institutional responsibilities. Three institutions made reference to the time required for "clinical accompaniment".

Ways in which the quality of teaching is affected by having temporary lecturers at institutions

Institutions were asked in what ways the quality of teaching was affected by having temporary lecturers at their institutions. At eight institutions quality assurance of teaching and learning practices (such as problems with marking practices) were considered to be challenges resulting from having temporary teachers. Difficulty with inculcating the culture of the organisation and commitment (for example, socialising temporary teachers into the institution) was seen as another challenge by eight institutions. A few institutions (7) mentioned that having temporary lecturers posed a challenge, especially with workload allocation, timetabling schedules and time to engage in student support activities to help students learn.

There were also positive aspects to having temporary teachers at institutions. Some institutions (14) reported that having temporary staff contributed to the quality of teaching due to their experience and expertise in industry. Contributing to specialised skills was also seen as a positive contribution by 10 institutions.

Aspects assessed in appraisal of teaching performance

In response to the question in which institutions were asked whether they assessed teaching in performance appraisals of academic staff, 60 said yes. The question also asked what is assessed and how. Figure 3.1 shows various aspects of teaching that are included in the performance appraisal of academic staff.

Thirty-seven institutions indicated that they use feedback from peers and student evaluation forms as part of appraising the teaching of academic staff. A few institutions (14) reported that individual records of lesson plans and ratings are considered, as well as class visits, which may be conducted every term, each semester, bi-annually, or annually. These visits can be either scheduled or unscheduled.

Sixteen institutions reported that assessment of teaching performance was used as a way to provide guidance and mentoring for teaching staff. A few (11) institutions indicated that the appraisal process provided them with an opportunity to reflect on practices in order to plan for staff development activities.
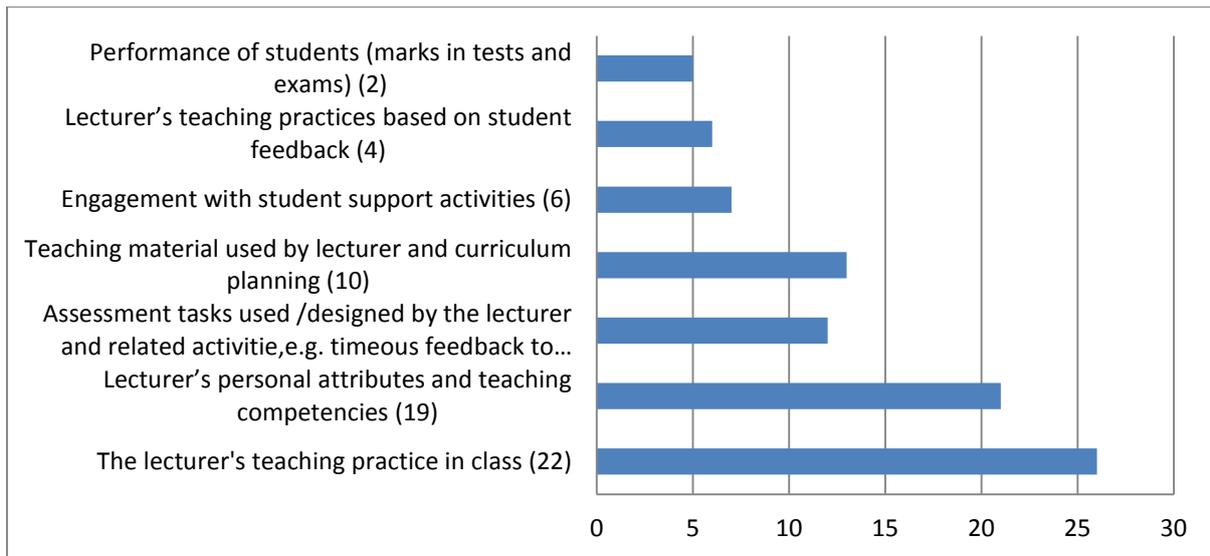
Figure 3.1: Aspects of teaching that are included in performance appraisal of staff

Examples of other good practices at institutions related to the focus area 1

Institutions were asked to list not more than five examples of good practice related to focus area 1. Two main areas of good practice were identified. The first relates to individual, collaborative and collegial reflective practices. The most frequent practices are shown in Figure 3.2.
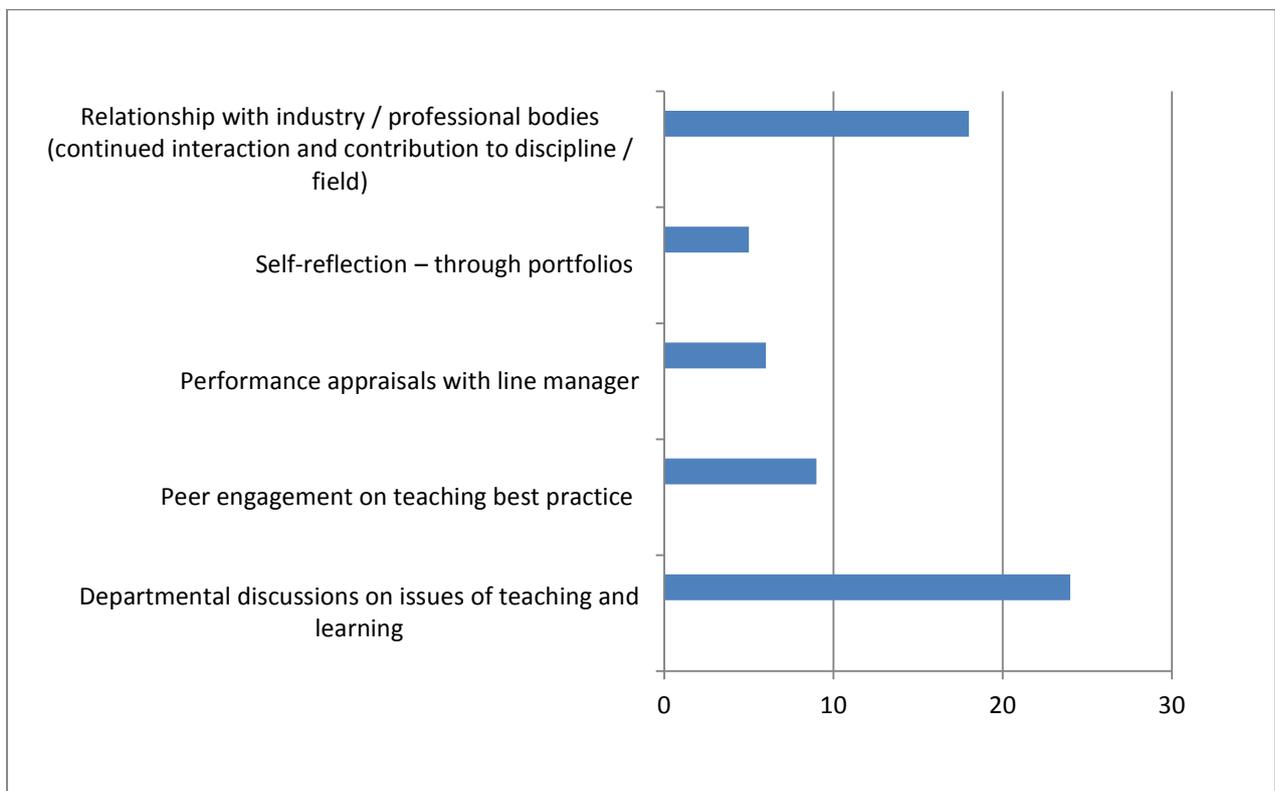
Figure 3.2: Examples of good practice related to individual, collaborative and collegial reflective practices

The second area relates to the provision of resources for support staff development activities. The most frequent practices are shown in Figure 3.3.
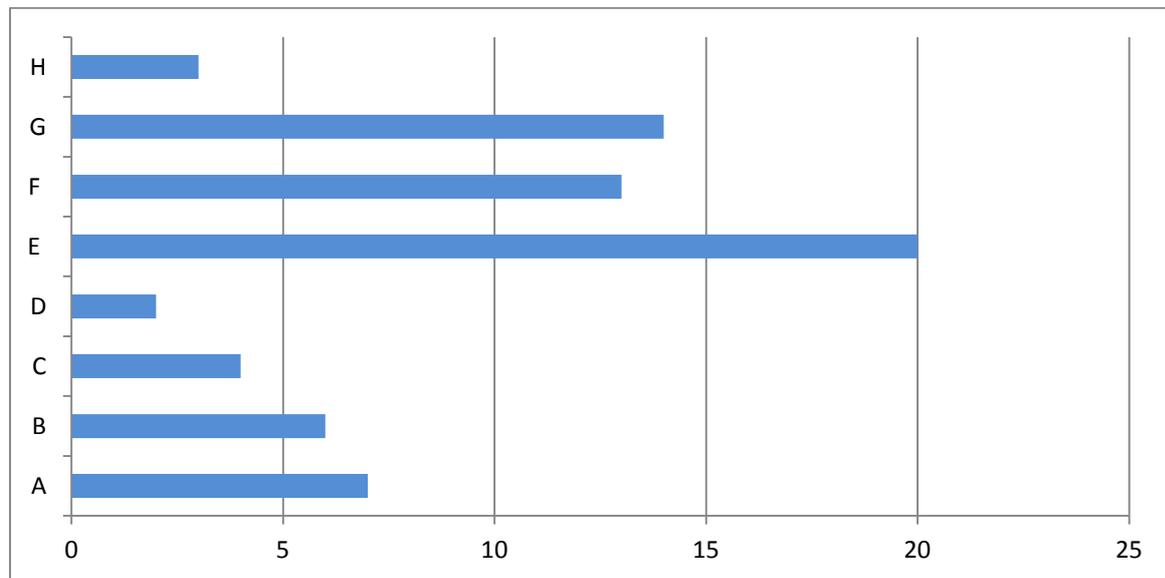
A. Time is allocated for staff to go on sabbatical leave to engage in activities that will support professional development (7)
B. Availability of technology to support both teaching and research activities (6)
C. Funds are made available for staff members to enrol in formal qualifications, attend conferences etc. (4)
D. Library resources are available which includes specialist books (2)
E. In-House training activities focused on staff development of teaching expertise (20)
F. Mentoring of new staff (that have not taught before) by experienced academics (13)
G. Engagement in research activities (conducting research, writing for publications, presenting at conferences) (14)
H. Recognition and award of excellence in teaching performance (3)

Figure 3.3: Examples of good practice related to provision of resources to support staff development activities

Main challenges or problems related to the focus area 1

Institutions were asked what the main challenges or problems were related to focus area 1 that need to be addressed at their institutions. A number of institutions (21) reported that some lecturers who identified themselves as specialists in their fields do not always have a teaching qualification. Other challenges identified relate to a lack of resources required for staff development activities and limited time to participate in staff development activities and to try out or implement what has been learnt. A few institutions (12) mentioned that the high workload for staff, and therefore an inability to balance a variety of responsibilities, was a challenge. A shortage of funding for ongoing training of lecturers was identified by eight institutions as a major challenge.

4. FOCUS AREA 2: ENHANCING STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

Generally, in this focus area institutions did not provide a great deal of information in response to the questions. What is not clear is whether curriculum advising and career guidance is not a major challenge for many of the institutions or whether this problem is only faced by large institutions with a variety of programmes which students may need assistance to choose from. Furthermore, it may be that smaller institutions have a curriculum that is well structured. It is worth noting that throughout this focus area when institutions give examples of activities to support students they also include work integrated or experiential learning activities. This is somewhat surprising as work-integrated learning activities are normally integrated into vocationally-oriented curriculum rather than being treated as separate support activities.

Career guidance provided to students before enrolment

In response to a question asking whether the institutions provide career guidance to students before they enrol for a specific programme, 56 answered yes. When indicating the forms of career guidance that they have in place, 18 institutions mentioned that students have opportunities for discussions on career prospects with dedicated individuals in the institution such as Heads of Departments, Academic Head, Dean of Studies, Campus Head and others in position of academic leadership. The nature of the interaction during career guidance ranges from face to face conversations to telephonic or email discussions. Other forms of career guidance mentioned by 10 institutions include screening tests (interviews and questionnaires) done by students during the application process. This is followed by the provision of appropriate information based on the results of each student.

Very few institutions made reference to regular career workshops and information sessions, such as includes open days and orientation, as part of their career guidance initiatives. One institution mentioned that career guidance is embedded in their curricula or programmes and is offered on a continuous basis. Some institutions indicated that career guidance is not needed because they are either single focus institutions or seminaries.

Career guidance provided to students after enrolment for a specific programme

In response to a question asking whether the institutions provide career guidance to students after they have decided to enrol for a specific programme 54 answered yes. Two main ways of providing guidance to students after enrolment were mentioned by institutions. First, 16 institutions indicated that students have the opportunity to have discussions with dedicated individuals in the institution on career guidance, which is conducted through face-to-face interaction, online or telephonically. Second, 15 institutions stated that career guidance activities are part of the learning programme, which includes informal discussions with academic staff, assessment activities aimed at guiding students, inclusion of professional practice modules or workshops.

A few institutions (8) indicated that there are activities carried out to expose students to the nature of industry related to learning programmes. Some institutions mentioned that because of the nature (single focus) of the programmes they offer, minimal career guidance is needed.

Advising registered students on curriculum planning

In response to a question asking whether institutions provide advice to registered students on how to plan their curricula during their programme, 58 institutions said yes. However, most of these institutions did not provide details on the form or nature of this activity. Fifteen institutions indicated that they offer advice on selection or change of subjects, modules or programmes and that there are dedicated people for this role. However, in two institutions academic staff do the advising. There was also an indication from eight institutions that they assist students with timetable and subject planning, which is done at the beginning of the year with the support of the Dean of Studies, Campus Manager, Student support officer and Registrar.

Counselling provided to registered students when needed

In response to a question asking whether the institution provides counselling to registered students when needed, only 22 of the 69 institutions said yes. The nature of the counselling ranges from educational or academic counselling (course related) to psycho-social counselling. The counselling is provided to all students by people such as lecturers, academic development coordinators, academic managers or counsellors. In two cases, counselling is provided to underperforming students by external specialists or student support officers. Ten institutions indicated that they have specialised or professional counselling provided by psychologists, psychiatrists, student support coordinators and other external providers. In other institutions (10) students are advised to firstly seek the counsel of staff or appointed counsellors regarding problems that they may be facing before they can be referred to a specialist. There are opportunities for counselling in a number of areas, including social and spiritual wellbeing, which are offered by the Dean of Students, Academic administrators, Counsellors, Academic heads or Heads of Department.

Institutions indicated that they provide counselling in many areas including lifestyle and specific health matters provided by experts, financial counselling provided by financial counsellors or academic head and Head of Department as well as career advising provided by counsellors or experts.

Mechanism for appraising students' life and academic skills

In response to a question asking whether institutions have a mechanism for appraising students' life and academic skills 49 said yes. Three common means of appraising these skills emerged from the submissions. First, 17 institutions indicated that they use formal and summative assessment activities in the learning programme to assess students' academic skills. Nine institutions mentioned that they monitor and evaluate students' academic skills in assessment reports and workshops. Seven institutions use entrance assessments, including recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes for appraising students' life and academic skills. Seventeen institutions mentioned that they use mentorship programmes and "skills

passports" to track and assess the technical skills of students. One institution stated that it uses the National Benchmark Tests (NBT) for placement purposes.

A few institutions mentioned that they use feedback from industry, clinical assessments or other work-integrated learning activities, as well as student achievement, to appraise students' academic skills.

Voluntary activities designed to develop life and academic skills

In response to a question asking whether institutions provide voluntary activities that are explicitly designed to develop students' life and academic skills, 45 said yes. In this question two key issues were considered: which students may participate in voluntary activities and what the nature of these activities were.

Students that may participate in activities

Twenty-three institutions mentioned that they have activities that are voluntary in which all students are encouraged to participate. Although this section is on voluntary activities, several institutions (7) indicated that activities are integrated into the curriculum and in that way all students participate. In a few cases institutions mentioned that the activities designed to develop life and academic skills are mandatory for underperforming students and target groups such as first year students and the Student Representative Council. These institutions further indicated that other students were encouraged to participate in the activities.

Nature of the activities

A number of institutions (28) have community engagement activities that are aimed at personal development and empowerment, as well as life skills. This includes activities of a similar nature organised by the Student Representative Council (SRC) which are not discipline-specific but focus on social responsibility. In 28 institutions students are provided with instructional support through extra classes, workshops, mentoring and tutoring, as well as academic literacy development activities. Ten institutions referred to work-integrated learning activities, which are community engagement projects linked to the development of professional skills.

Compulsory activities designed to develop life and academic skills

In response to a question asking whether institutions require students to participate in activities that are explicitly designed to develop students' life and academic skills, 53 said yes. However, institutions did not provide adequate details on the nature of these activities.

Students that must participate in activities

Twenty-two institutions indicated that the activities are mandatory for some students and optional for others. For example, all students at risk of failing, students in certain year levels and programmes of study and SRC members (for capacity building) have to participate in certain activities, whilst other students who wish to participate are allowed to participate as

well. Sixteen institutions stated that activities aimed at developing life and academic skills were not optional and that all students are required to participate.

Nature of the activities

The main activities reported by institutions (24) are work-integrated and/or experiential learning activities, which include community engagement projects aimed at developing professional skills. Academic literacy and skills development programmes were mentioned by 15 institutions. Other activities reported include personal development and life skills and instructional support in the form of bridging courses, mentoring programmes, subject specific tutorials and participation in cultural activities.

Mechanism for identifying students at risk of failing

In response to a question asking whether institutions have a mechanism for identifying students that are at risk of failing, 68 said yes. From the responses, two aspects emerged as crucial to the mechanisms in place: the data that institutions use to identify students and the people that are responsible for the process.

The different data sources used by institutions to identify students at risk include performance in assessments and exams, class attendance and participation in class activities and submission of work. Institutions indicated that there are people responsible for identifying students at risk through monitoring and review of students' performance. The responsible people include Academic Managers, Programme Managers, Quality Assurance Facilitators and Academic Advisors. In some cases, students' performance reviews are done by academic staff during meetings or faculty board meetings.

Support given to at-risk students

Institutions were asked whether the support to at-risk students was voluntary or compulsory or whether no support was given. The responses are summarised in Figure 4.1
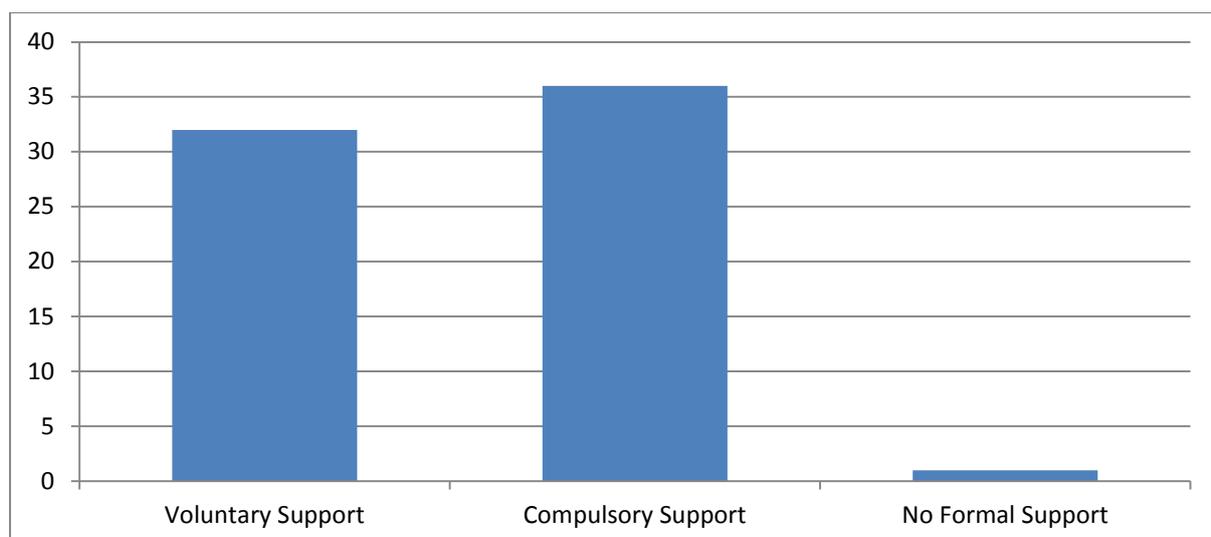

Figure 4.1: Type of support institutions provide for at-risk students

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Institutions indicated three main ways in which students at risk are supported across the institutions. First, 39 institutions indicated that they provide guidance, advising and counselling focused on academic or personal issues. This is done through one-on-one consultation between the individual student and the person providing support. Second, forty-three institutions indicated that they have various support activities, which include mentoring and a tutorial system or extra classes focused on subject knowledge. Fourteen institutions indicated that they also involve parents, guardians or sponsors as another way to provide support to students who are at risk of failing. Third, six institutions mentioned that they provide activities that could support students' development of academic skills such as time management, writing skills and exam preparation.

Examples of other good practices at institutions related to the focus area 2

Institutions were asked to list not more than five examples of good practice related to focus area 2. Twenty-six institutions mentioned that because of a relatively low lecturer-student ratio they have more engagement with individual students' needs than in less well-staffed institutions. These institutions have an open door policy whereby students can consult with staff anytime when there is a need. Fourteen institutions mentioned that they provide student support in the form of mentoring and tutor systems and academic skills development activities, focusing on time management, library searches, study methods, exam preparation and academic counselling. Some institutions have SRC activities and opportunities for student empowerment in leadership skills.

Other examples mentioned by a few institutions (9) include academic literacy programmes focusing on developing an academic argument, writing and reading, numeracy, fundamental mathematics and accounting. They also indicated that they have opportunities for work-integrated learning or experiential learning, such as industry placements, clinical practice and simulations on campus, as well as preparation for placement.

Eight institutions mentioned that they have various activities which are aimed at supporting students with disabilities and special needs or temporary impairment. These institutions also provide welfare support, focused on providing food to students, emotional support, relationship guidance and pastoral guidance. In addition, three institutions indicated that they offer bursaries and financial support to students.

Main challenges or problems related to the focus area 2

Institutions were asked what the main challenges or problems were related to focus area 2 that need to be addressed at their institutions. Lack of resources for academic development activities is a major challenge mentioned by many institutions. Resource challenges include human resources, dedicated people to work with students on academic development activities and infrastructure, which includes ramps for wheelchairs, internet, facilities and equipment. Funding for academic development activities and time for participating in academic development activities (for both staff and students) is another challenge mentioned by institutions.

Another area of concern for institutions is students' lack of personal agency for their development. Several institutions mentioned that students have access to support services but do not make use of the services. Institutions also noted that students are not well prepared for higher education learning due to poor school education.

Nine institutions that mentioned challenged related to distance learning, which include lack of infrastructure and the difficulty of organising student support activities.

5.   FOCUS AREA 3: ENHANCING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Teaching spaces that are effective in promoting student success

Institutions were asked to describe features of their teaching spaces that they think are effective in promoting student success and to give examples of specific effective teaching spaces. Many institutions (33) indicated that their IT infrastructure is extensive and aligned with teaching and learning activities in the institution. Other features mentioned by 34 institutions include: well-maintained building infrastructure (spaces for contact sessions) that is appropriate for the number of students (such as no overcrowding, well furnished, air conditioned). For 28 institutions, teaching equipment was reported to be available or adequate and aligned to the teaching and learning activities. Eleven institutions mentioned that they provide spaces for practical and work integrated learning activities, such as simulations.

Figure 5.1 shows the most commonly cited examples of teaching spaces that institutions identified as effective in promoting learning.
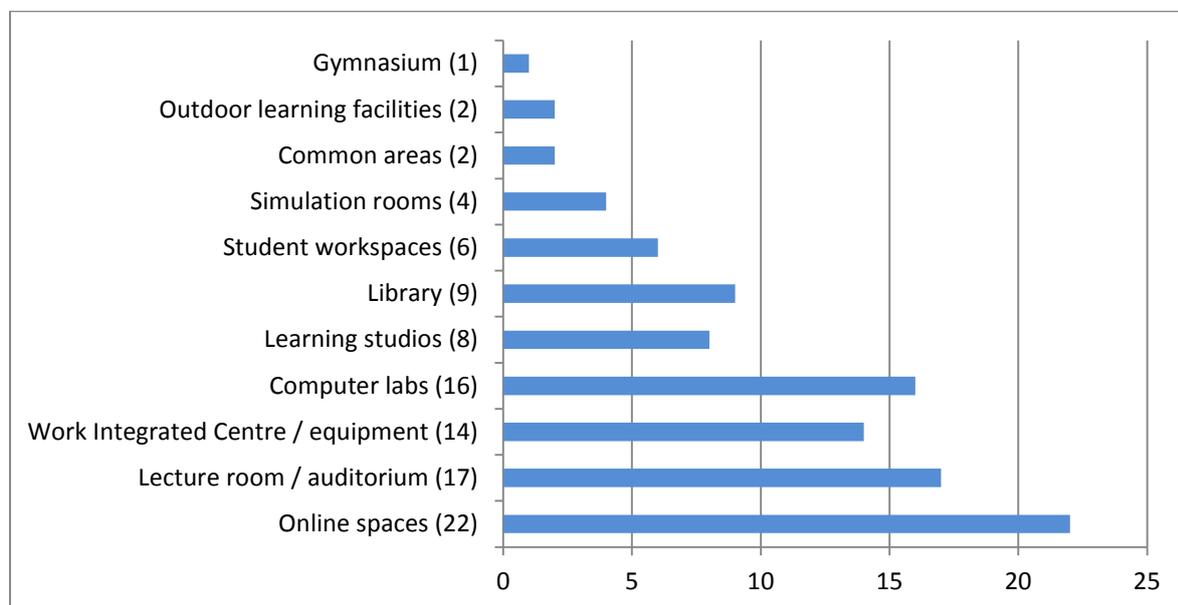

Figure 5.1: Examples given by institutions of effective teaching spaces

Teaching spaces that are not as effective as they could be in promoting student success

Institutions were asked to describe features of their teaching spaces that they think are not as effective as they could be in promoting student success and to give examples of specific teaching spaces. A number of institutions (27) indicated the inadequate and limited availability of building infrastructure and general maintenance. Problems raised included insufficient lecture room space for the number of students, poor lighting, no soundproofing and poor ventilation. A few institutions (11) reported limited availability of equipment necessary for teaching and learning activities, such as computers, audio-visual material, printing facilities and digital projectors, as features of learning spaces impacting negatively on promoting student success.

Figure 5.2 shows the most commonly cited examples of features of teaching spaces that institutions identified as not as effective as they could be in promoting learning.
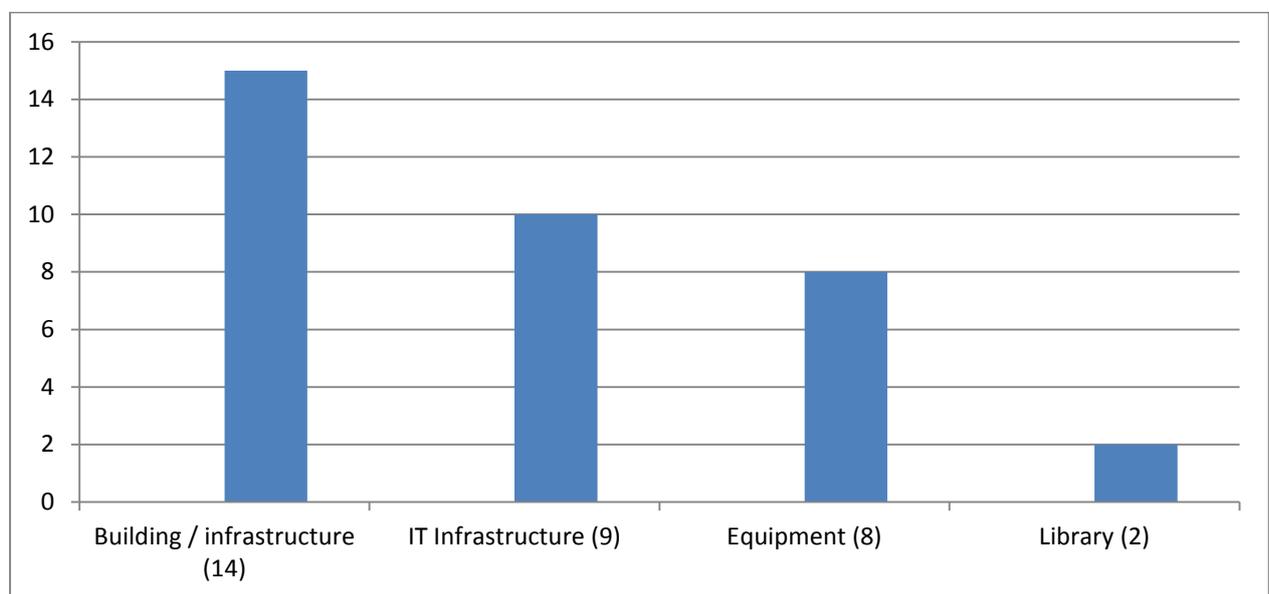
Figure 5.2: Examples given by institutions of features of teaching spaces that are not as effective as they could be.

Learning spaces provided for students to learn individually

Institutions were asked to describe learning spaces that they provide for students to learn individually and to identify features of these spaces that are important in promoting student success and that may hamper student success. Many institutions (40) mentioned that they provide spaces in the library for self-study (cubicles in which note books or laptops could be used). A few institutions (13) reported that they provide computer labs that have been set up for individual work, student common areas/outdoor areas (such as a cafeteria, outdoor fitted tables); studio and work-integrated learning spaces outside class time. Eight institutions mentioned that they provide other spaces, such as the resource centre and study centre, which is used by for individual and personal study. Seven institutions indicated that lecture rooms,

classroom, conference rooms and board rooms can also be used as learning spaces when they are unoccupied.

In terms of features of learning spaces that institutions consider as most important in promoting student success, (27) mentioned IT infrastructure (internet connectivity) as most important. Some institutions (16) reported that building infrastructure is well maintained and adequately resourced, and the library (computer facilities in the library, internet access, sufficient space and adequate resources) is an important learning space for promoting student success. Ten institutions mentioned that they ensure that studio spaces are well equipped with up-to-date equipment (such as specialised software).

In terms of features of learning spaces that institutions think are hampering student success, some institutions (14) reported that limited space to accommodate the number of students, especially for individual study or engagement with other learning activities, is a major challenge. IT infrastructure, lack of internet access and students' tendency to plagiarise information from the web were mentioned as hampering student success by 15 institutions. Ten institutions reported that challenges with library facilities, such as access hours, limited space and resources, impacted on how effectively students utilise the library. A few institutions (9) mentioned that high noise levels by students can be disruptive when sessions are in progress and this can be a challenge.

Learning spaces that institutions provide for students to learn collaboratively

Institutions were asked to describe learning spaces that they provide for students to learn collaboratively and to identify features of these spaces that are important in promoting student success and that may hamper student success. Many institutions (31) mentioned that they provide classrooms, lecture rooms, and boardrooms as areas that can be used when there are no lectures in progress. A few institutions (14) reported that they provide IT spaces, which include online systems, learning management systems, and internet connectivity as spaces to learn collaboratively. Thirteen institutions also mentioned that they provide student common areas such as the cafeteria and/or canteen for students to work and learn collaboratively.

In terms of the features of learning spaces that institutions indicated as most important in promoting student success, many institutions (33) mentioned that the layout of learning spaces (physical space), such as desks that can be moved or organised according to the particular learning activity, simulation work places, internet connectivity, as well as clean and tidy learning spaces, promoted student success. The availability of infrastructure and resources, which includes desks, Wi-Fi access, online support, video conferencing facilities, whiteboards and design software was also reported as important in the promotion of student success by a number of institutions (29).

On the features of learning spaces that are hampering student success, a few institutions (13) mentioned limited space and availability of learning spaces and high noise levels (12) as negative factors. Seven institutions mentioned that sometimes students do not fully utilise the learning spaces for learning purposes – at times they are tempted to socialise more than

engage in learning activities and sometimes students skip class and use the space for social activities. There was an indication from seven institutions that limited availability of IT infrastructure poses a threat to promoting student success.

Institutions that indicated to having online learning management systems
In response to a question asking if the institution has an online learning management system, 40 institutions answered yes and 29 answered no. If the answer was yes, institutions were asked to estimate what fraction of students has access to the online system on campus and at home. These results are shown in Figures 5.3 and 5.4
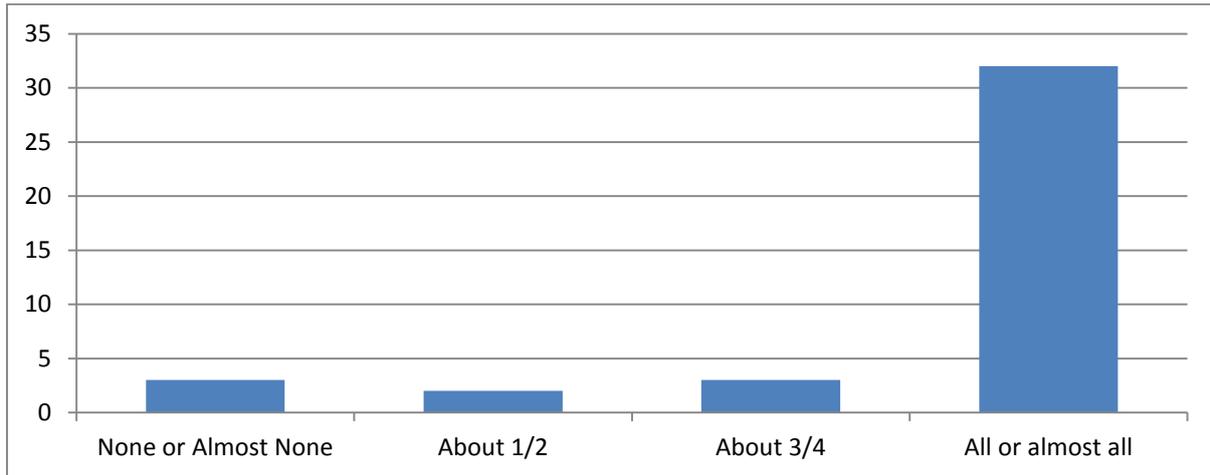

Figure 5.3: Estimated fraction of students that have access to online learning management systems on campus.
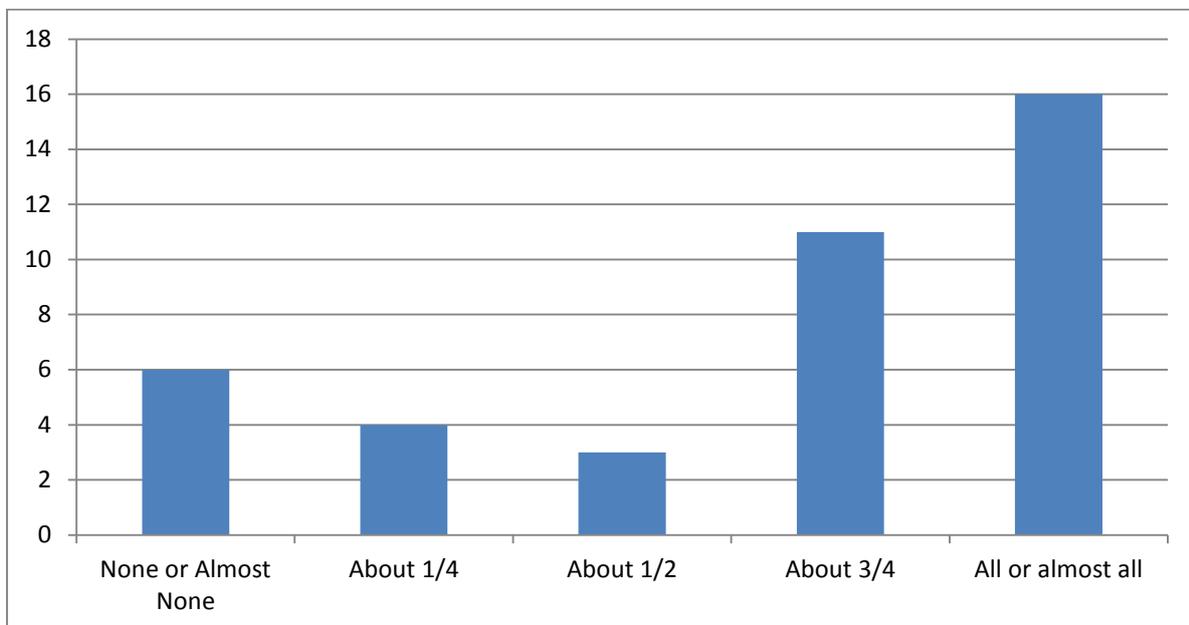
Figure 5.44: Estimated fraction of students that have access to online learning management systems at home

Institutions were also asked to estimate what fraction of courses or modules make use of the online system. The results are shown in Figure 5.5.
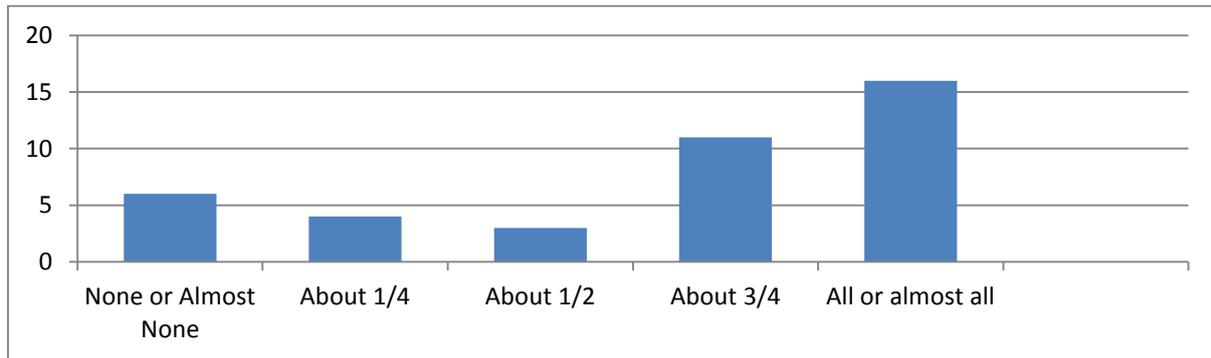
Figure 5.5: Estimated fraction of courses or modules that make use of the online learning management system

Institutions were asked to provide examples of how technology is being used to promote learning at their institution. The most common examples are shown in Figure 5.6.
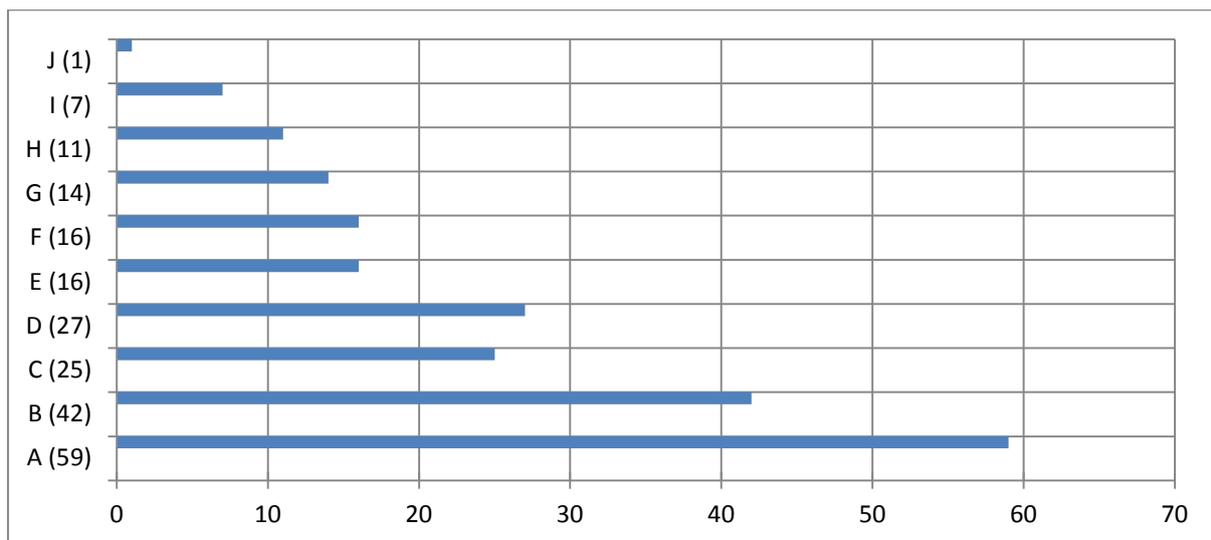
A. E-learning (classroom, tutorials and discussion forums such as wikis) (59)
B. General use of IT equipment by students and lecturers (email, printing, cameras) (42)
C. Access to on-line journals in the library for research and study purposes (25)
D. Internet access in computer labs, library and some classrooms (27)
E. LMS provide opportunity to give students information on assessment, work on tasks, submit assignments, give feedback and record marks (16)
F. Power point presentations in lectures (16)
G. Communication / dissemination of information to students (14)
H. Simulation labs and practical lab with high technology software and other necessary applications (11)
I. Administrative purposes such as managing students' personal information, turn-it-in for checking on plagiarism, downloading timetables etc. (7)
J. Online Work sharing (1)

Figure 5.6: How technology is used at institutions to promote student learning

Main challenges or problems that institutions face in using technology to promote student success

Institutions indicated that one of the main challenges they have when using technology to promote student success is access to, and reliability of, internet services (39 institutions). Finances (resources) to support the costs involved in the use of technology was a concern for 25 institutions. Nineteen institutions also mentioned the lack of computer literacy skills among students as a major challenge to the promotion of student success.

Library facilities

Institutions were asked to list the good aspects of their library facilities and the ways in which the library facilities need to be improved. In terms of the good aspects of the library facilities available to students, 51 institutions mentioned that they provide research facilities, such as electronic databases for sourcing books (EBSCO host and SABINET for journals). Thirty-nine institutions stated that the general infrastructure in institutions is good. This includes a help desk, computers with sophisticated software, workstations, internet access and printing facilities. Accessibility was also mentioned by 42 institutions as another good aspect of the library, which includes being available outside normal library hours and from anywhere. Twenty-six institutions mentioned the presence of library assistance (support staff are available) and 22 institutions mentioned IT infrastructure (access to internet) as good aspects of the library that are available to students.

In terms of library facilities that need to be improved, many institutions (39) mentioned that space for students to learn, both individually and collaboratively, is limited. Twenty-five institutions mentioned that library resources, such as books and periodicals (such as variety of up to date and relevant books, eBooks), need improvement. Other aspects that need improvement include student access to the library (flexible hours) and online access to library facilities or resources (16), IT infrastructure, such as internet access, greater availability (12), general equipment, such as appropriate furniture, computer stations and copying and printing facilities (13), and databases, such as more resources and also availability (10).

Examples of other good practices at institutions related to the focus area 3

Institutions were asked to list not more than five examples of good practice related to focus area 3. The most common examples are shown in Figure 5.7
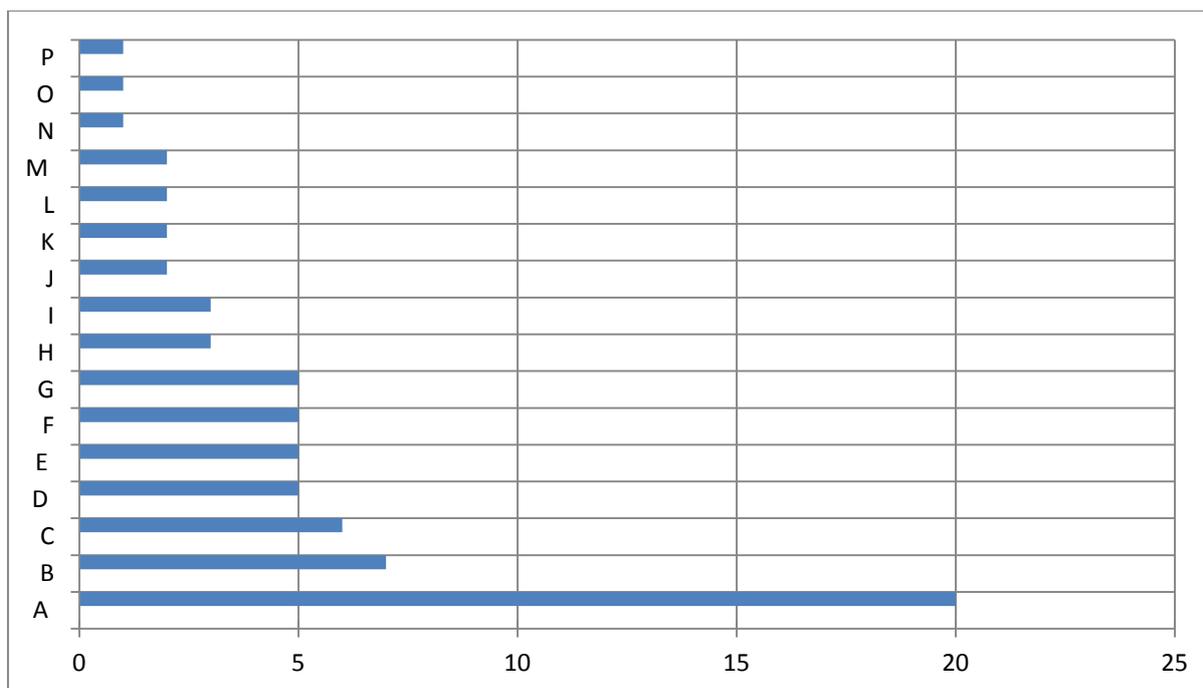
A. IT facilities to support teaching and learning (such as e-textbooks, computers, scanners, printers, projectors) (20)
B. Practical facilities/simulations that are accessible and have security (students can book for rehearsals or demo) (7)
C. Infrastructure (e.g. upgrades of studios, classrooms, student accommodation) (6)
D. Work Integrated Learning Facilities (5)
E. Maintenance of equipment and environment (5)
F. Student common areas (Cafeteria / student lounge) (5)
G. Environment (e.g. tranquil, attractive outdoor facilities) (5)
H. Shift in ways of teaching (general) (3)
I. Support (e.g. dedicated librarians) (3)
J. Sporting equipment and play activities (2)
K. Library (2)
L. Security (e.g. security is tight) (2)
M. Research (e.g. commissioned research to improve learning environment) (2)
N. Diverse learning spaces (1)
O. Access (e.g. 24hr access) (1)
P. MOA with universities (e.g. use of libraries) (1)

Figure 5.7: Most common examples of good practice in relation to 'enhancing the learning environment'

Main challenges or problems related to the focus area 3

Institutions were asked what the main challenges or problems were related to focus area 3 that need to be addressed at their institutions. Many institutions (29) identified challenges related to IT Infrastructure, which include affordability of software needed for teaching and learning, upgrading of computer laboratories, access to the internet and reliable connectivity. Twenty-six institutions reported challenges related to insufficient spaces for individual and collaborative learning, teaching (seminar room or lecture rooms) and spaces for students to engage in extra-curricular activities. A few institutions (13) mentioned challenges related to the library and resources, including space, security system to monitor access and use of

material, no staff dedicated to library support and limited funding for library material. Ten institutions mentioned financial resources for maintaining and upgrading facilities for the purposes of enriching learning experience as challenges that are yet to be addressed.

6. FOCUS AREA 4: ENHANCING COURSE AND PROGRAMME ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT

There were few responses to the questions on this focus area. From the responses that were received, it seems that institutions misinterpreted or misunderstood what was required, as many responses spoke about monitoring students rather than courses or programmes. In addition, the responses suggest that institutions understand the management of enrolment as an administrative task rather than an academic process.

Information utilised by institutions in deciding whether or not to admit a student

Institutions were asked what information they utilise in deciding whether or not to admit a student. All institutions indicated that results of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations are the main information source they use. Twenty-two institutions indicated that, in addition to these results, they have specific programme or discipline entry requirements. For example, the applicant might need technical or aesthetic knowledge related to the discipline, and have to demonstrate their knowledge in the area through individual portfolios. In some instances auditions are conducted. Twenty-one institutions mentioned that they use the students' NSC results and also expect applicants to participate in pre-enrolment assessments, such as psychometric testing, skills tests and entrance exam interviews. Recognition of prior learning, including recommendations from the workplace, is used by 12 institutions to make admission decisions. Four institutions indicated that they make attempts to establish the financial background of students in order to determine if they would be in a position to pay tuition fees.

Programmes for students who enter with differing levels of preparation

In response to the question on whether institutions offer different programmes for students entering with differing levels of preparation, 32 said yes. If the response was yes, institutions were asked what information was used to determine whether a student enters a mainstream programme or a programme with additional support. The main forms of information used and the number of institutions that indicated they use them are:

- Meeting entry requirements based on matric results (8)
- Exposure to basics of the discipline (measured through auditions/ RPL processes) (3)
- Academic ability and performance (students assessed for academic preparedness in terms of factors such as reading comprehension, writing skills and mathematics) (3)
- Matric results plus subject specific requirements as well as point system (2)

Nine institutions indicated that students need to meet entry requirements based on matric results. The rest of the responses in this section focused on two issues. First, there was a need for exposure to the basics of the discipline, which is assessed through auditions or Recognition of Prior Learning processes. Second, some institutions indicated that there is a need to assess students' academic ability and performance, especially academic preparedness in areas such as reading comprehension, writing skills and numerical literacy.

Responses to the question on how effective institutions think they are at selecting students who are likely to succeed are shown in Figure 6.1. No one answered "poor".
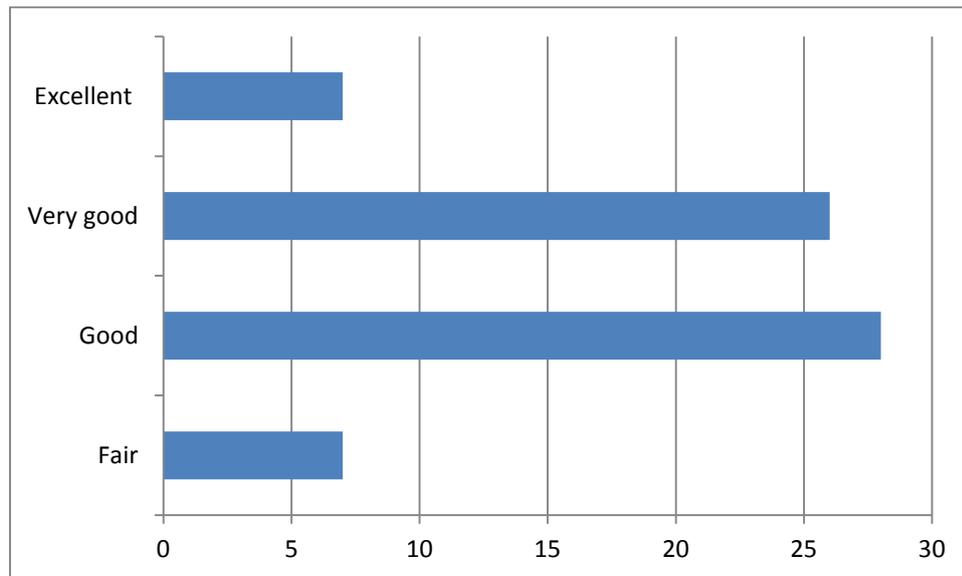
Figure 6.1: How effective institutions think they are at selecting students likely to succeed

Support for students at risk of being refused readmission

In response to the question about whether students at risk for being refused readmission are referred for support, 43 institutions said yes. When asked whether the support is compulsory or voluntary, 16 said compulsory and 27 said voluntary.

Institutions indicated that the support offered includes supplementary exams, extra classes, bridging courses, remedial courses, mentoring and tutoring. Fifteen institutions indicated that they offer curriculum guidance and counselling to assist students with regard to change of programme or courses. A few (8) institutions mentioned that other support activities they provide are monitoring and coaching of individual student by a member of academic staff, as well as involving parents, guardian or sponsors.

Mechanism for monitoring student performance in gateway courses

In response to the question about whether they have a mechanism for monitoring student performance in gateway courses[1], 39 institutions said yes. When describing how this is done, 17 institutions mentioned that they conduct reviews of students' academic performance and progress in order to identify those at risk. This review is done by staff in faculties, exam committees or people dedicated to this responsibility, as indicated in the processes for identification of at risk students in the institutions policy documents. Seven institutions mentioned that the mechanisms they use to identify gateway courses are the same as those they use to identify at-risk students, which include monitoring students' performance in both formative and summative assessments and class attendance. Students' participation in class and submission of tasks according to programme requirements is also monitored.

Actions taken by institution if student performance in gateway courses is deemed to be too low

Institutions were asked what actions, if any, they take if student performance in gateway courses is deemed to be too low. Responses to this question focus more on students than on the courses. Ten institutions indicated that they provide consultations and academic counselling to students. This could be one-on-one consultation, which sometimes involves parents in order to support the students. Institutions also highlighted that this process could lead to advising the student to enrol in a different programme that may be less demanding or more suited to their interests. Other institutions (8) indicated that they provide remedial classes, extra classes and support classes. In addition to these activities, six institutions mentioned that students at risk have opportunities to resubmit assessments, re-write exams and repeat modules.

Only four institutions mentioned that they conduct reviews of the course and the assessment tasks in cases where students' performance in a module is low. In one institution the review process is then followed by staff training if necessary.

Tracking performance of students in a given cohort

In response to the questions asking whether they track the performance of students in a given cohort, 53 institutions said yes. If the response was yes, institutions were asked how they do the tracking. It should be noted that not all institutions indicated how they conduct the tracking. Sixteen institutions indicated that they use an electronic student management system for tracking. Another 16 institutions stated that they track performance through academic performance reports captured in spreadsheets, transcripts and assessment statistics. Some institutions (10) mentioned that student numbers are low so a complicated system is not required; the Head of Department (or equivalent) closely monitors the performance of students. Two institutions indicated that tracking is done by monitoring the employment of students who graduated from the institution.

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[1] Gateways courses can act as barriers or gates to progression because they are prerequisites for many students in later courses.

Examples of other good practices at institutions related to the focus area 4

Institutions were asked to list not more than five examples of good practice related to focus area 4. Twelve institutions mentioned that they conduct pre-enrolment screening assessments, which involve written tests, interviews and Recognition of Prior Learning processes. Six indicated that due to lecturer-student ratios that are low it was possible for students to have interaction with lectures as well as the opportunity to receive guidance and counselling, which focused on providing information on the courses students are registered for. Five institutions made reference to the development and review of academic programmes at faculty level and the involvement of workplace-based individuals to ensure the relevance of what students are being taught. A few institutions (4) mentioned that they monitor the progress of students and also involve parents, guardians or sponsors in supporting student who are at risk of failing. Furthermore, students are offered financial support and there are flexible payment methods to deal with financial challenges.

Main challenges or problems related to the focus area 4

Institutions were asked what the main challenges or problems were related to focus area 4 that need to be addressed at their institutions. One is the main challenges (indicated by 14 institutions) is lack of funding for students to pay tuition fees. Thirteen institutions indicated that the quality of school leavers enrolling in higher education is a challenge. Seven institutions indicated that they have challenges with recording and updating students' biographical information due to changes in students' contact details, students providing misleading information or lack of a student portal. There were a few institutions (7) that mentioned managing the process of student applications, such as late applications and students' lack of competence to complete application forms properly, as challenges. Four institutions mentioned that it was a challenge to track students during the programme, for example, those students that drop out and students that have completed or not completed a programme. Two institutions indicated that access to technology needed for teaching and learning activities and for support programmes for students that do not meet entrance requirements is a challenge.

7.   OTHER FACTORS THAT AFFECT STUDENT SUCCESS

Institutions were asked to list other things that affect student success at their institutions that had not been mentioned already. Sixteen institutions indicated that students' success is affected by financial needs, which include non-payment of tuition fees, not purchasing learning material and not being able to attend classes as required due to the cost of travelling to campus. Students' lack of preparedness for higher education learning and its demands, especially the lack of the required competencies and capabilities, was mentioned by 10 institutions as adversely affecting student success.

In a few cases (7 institutions) socio-economic factors, including relationships, drug abuse and family life, were linked to students' poor class attendance. Seven institutions indicated that

students' lack of motivation and passion for the job they are training for are factors that negatively affect success.

References

NOTE: The documents listed below can be accessed from the CHE website, www.che.ac.za

Council on Higher Education (2015). *Content Analysis of the Baseline Institutional Submissions for Phase 1 of the Quality Enhancement Project.* Council on Higher Education: Pretoria.

Council on Higher Education (2014). *Framework for Institutional Quality Enhancement in the Second Period of Quality Assurance*. Council on Higher Education: Pretoria.

Council on Higher Education (2013). *A proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa: The case for a flexible curriculum structure*. Council on Higher Education: Pretoria.

APPENDIX: On-line Questionnaire

A. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

In questions 1 to 5, select the ONE option that describes your institution.

1.Institutional type	For-Profit	Non-Profit

2. Size of Institution	Less than 500 students	501 – 2000 students	2001 – 10 000 students	More than 10000 students

3.Mode of delivery	Contact	Distance	Distance & Contact

4.Number of Sites	Single	Multiple

5.Programme offerings	Single focus (one programme)	Narrow focus (variety of programmes)	Multiple focus (variety of programmes)

6.Briefly comment on any other aspects of your institutional context that are particularly noteworthy, challenging or salient in relation to student success (positive or negative).

B.FOCUS AREAS

FOCUS AREA 1: ENHANCING ACADEMICS AS TEACHERS
(Including professional development, reward and recognition, workload, conditions of service and performance appraisal)

The quality of teaching profoundly affects the quality of student learning. In addition to disciplinary expertise, academics as teachers need skills in pedagogy, curriculum and assessment, as well as other skills and attributes. Rewards and recognition, workload models and conditions of service (such as temporary or permanent, part-time or full-time appointments) may encourage or discourage the development of educational expertise among academics.

1. What requirements and opportunities does your institution have for developing **permanent** academic staff as teachers?

2. What requirements and opportunities does your institution have for developing **temporary** (non-permanent) academic staff as teachers?

3. Does your institution have a model for calculating academics' workload that is applied consistently across the institution? YES or NO

   If YES, which aspects of academics' work are included in the workload model?
   If NO, how are academics' workloads determined?

4. In what ways is the quality of teaching affected by having temporary lecturers at your institution?

5. Does your institution assess teaching in performance appraisals of academic staff? YES or NO

   If YES, what is assessed and how?

6. List not more than five examples of good practice at your institution related to the focus area, "Enhancing academics as teachers" that have not been covered already in this section.

7. What are the main challenges or problems related to the focus area, "Enhancing academics as teachers" that need to be addressed in your institution?

FOCUS AREA 2: ENHANCING STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT
(Including career and curriculum advising, life and academic skills development, counselling, student performance monitoring and referral)

This focus area deals with academically-focused student support and development, rather than students' material needs (important as those are). It includes career guidance, curriculum advising over a whole programme, life and academic skills and literacies development, counselling, monitoring of student performance and referral of at-risk students for support.

1. Does your institution provide career guidance to students before they decide to enrol for a specific programme? YES or NO

   If YES, what form of career guidance is provided, when and by whom?

2. Does your institution provide career guidance to students after they have decided to enrol for a specific programme? YES or NO

   If YES, what form of career guidance is provided, when and by whom?

3. Does your institution provide advice to registered students on how to plan their curriculum during their programme? YES or NO

   If YES, what form of curriculum advising is provided, when and by whom?

4. Does your institution provide counselling to registered students when needed? YES or NO

   If YES, what type of counselling is provided and by whom?

5. Does your institution have a mechanism for appraising students' life and academic skills? YES or NO

   If YES, briefly describe that mechanism.

6. Does your institution provide **voluntary** activities that are explicitly designed to develop students' life and academic skills? YES or NO

   If YES, which students may participate and what are those activities?

7. Does your institution **require** certain students to participate in activities that are explicitly designed to develop students' life and academic skills? YES or NO

   If YES, which students must participate and what are those activities?

8. Does your institution have a mechanism for identifying students that are at risk of failing? YES or NO

   If YES,

   What is that mechanism?
   At-risk students are given [voluntary support, compulsory support, no formal support]
   If support is offered, what is the nature of that support?

9. List not more than five examples of good practice at your institution related to the focus area, "Enhancing student support and development" that have not been covered already in this section.

10. What are the main challenges or problems related to the focus area, "Enhancing student support and development" that need to be addressed in your institution?

FOCUS AREA 3: ENHANCING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
(Including teaching and learning spaces, ICT infrastructure and access, technology-enabled tools and resources, library facilities)

This focus area deals with physical resources that affect teaching and learning. It includes teaching spaces, spaces for students to learn individually and collaboratively, ICT infrastructure, how technology is used to promote learning, and library facilities.

1. Describe features of your **teaching spaces** that you think are effective in promoting student success. You may give two or three examples of specific teaching spaces as illustrations.

2. Describe features of your **teaching spaces** that you think are not as effective as they could be in promoting student success. You may give two or three examples of specific teaching spaces as illustrations.

3. Describe **learning spaces** you provide for students to learn **individually**.

   Identify features of these learning spaces that you think are most important in promoting student success.

   Identify features of these learning spaces that you think may hamper student success.

4. Describe **learning spaces** you provide for students to learn **collaboratively**.

Identify features of these learning spaces that you think are most important in promoting student success.

Identify features of these learning spaces that you think may hamper student success.

5. Does your institution have an online learning management system (e.g. Moodle or Blackboard)?

    If YES,
    estimate what fraction of students have access to the online system on campus. [almost none, about ¼, about ½, about ¾, almost all]

    estimate what fraction of students have access to the online system at home. [almost none, about ¼, about ½, about ¾, almost all]

    Estimate what fraction of courses or modules make use of the online system [almost none, about ¼, about ½, about ¾, almost all]

6. List not more than five examples of how technology is being used at your institution to promote student learning.

7. What are the main challenges or problems your institution faces in using technology to promote student success at your institution?

8. List the good aspects of the library facilities available for your students.

9. In what ways do the library facilities need to be improved?

10. List not more than five examples of good practice at your institution related to the focus area, "Enhancing the learning environment" that have not been covered already in this section.

11. What are the main challenges or problems related to the focus area, "Enhancing the learning environment" that need to be addressed in your institution?

FOCUS AREA 4: ENHANCING COURSE AND PROGRAMME ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT
(Including admissions, selection, placements, readmission refusal, pass rates in gateway courses, throughput rates, management information systems)

This focus area deals with how students are selected and placed into appropriate programmes, whether or not formal support is available and compulsory and when and why students are not re-admitted. It also deals with student performance and institutional interventions in courses that act as gateways or barriers to progression because they are prerequisites without which students may not proceed. Throughput rates are included in this focus area, as well as management information systems.

1. What information is utilised by your institution in deciding whether or not to admit a student to your institution?

2. Does your institution offer different programmes for students who enter with differing levels of preparation? YES or NO (For example, there may be a mainstream programme and an extended programme that offers additional support.)

If YES, what information is used to determine whether a student enters a mainstream programme or a programme with some form of additional support?

3. How effective do you think your institution is at selecting students who are likely to succeed at your institution? [poor, fair, good, very good, excellent]

4. Are students who are at risk for being refused readmission referred for support? YES or NO

   If YES, is the support obligatory or voluntary?
   What types of support are provided?

5. Do you have a mechanism for monitoring student performance in gateway courses? YES or NO

   If YES, how do you do it?

6. What actions, if any, does your institution take if student performance in gateway courses is deemed to be too low?

7. Does your institution track the performance of students in a given cohort? YES or NO

   If YES, how?

8. List not more than five examples of good practice at your institution related to the focus area, "Enhancing course and programme enrolment management" that have not been covered already in this section.

9. What are the main challenges or problems related to the focus area, "Enhancing course and programme enrolment management" that need to be addressed in your institution?

C. OTHER THINGS THAT AFFECT STUDENT SUCCESS.

If there are other things that affect student success at your institution that you have not already mentioned, list them here.

D. INFORMATION ON COMPLETION OF SUBMISSION

Fill in the table below of names and designations of the people who helped complete this submission.

Name	Designation

Thank you for your participation.