**Quality Enhancement Project**

**Institutional Reports: Phase 1**

**Due Date: 11 December 2015**

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| **Name of Institution** | Rhodes University |
| **Contact Person** | Dr CM Boughey |
| **Date of submission** | January 2016 |

The aim of the institutional report is to demonstrate efforts to bring about enhancements in each of the four Quality Enhancement Project (QEP) focus areas since the beginning of Phase 1 of the QEP in February 2014, reflect on the journey towards enhancement and assess the extent to which the efforts have resulted in improvements.

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| **1. INTRODUCTION (suggested length 2-5 pages)** |
| Indicate how the report was prepared. Include a list of the people that were involved, their designations and their roles in the preparation of the report.  The report was drafted by Dr Chrissie Boughey, Deputy Vice Chancellor Academic & Student Affairs. Normally, it would have served before the Teaching and Learning Committee and then the QEP Committee. However, student protests at the end of the fourth term in 2015 prevented either of these meetings. |

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| **2. FOCUS AREA 1: ENHANCING ACADEMICS AS TEACHERS (suggested length 10-20 pages)**  ***Includes: professional development, reward and recognition, workload, conditions of service and performance appraisal.***  This section of the report should make reference to all of the sub-topics listed above, either by discussing them individually or by integrating them. Note: it is not necessary to respond to each of the questions below for every sub-topic. |
| 2.1 Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in enhancing academics as teachers in one or two paragraphs.  Our approach to developing academics as teachers takes into account the following key issues:   1. In South Africa, the enhancment of academics as teachers has to be done within a framework informed by critical social theory. Education is not fair – not just because of the way different institutions and schools are resourced but because its very fabric serves to support social structures which privilege some (typically the educated middle class) over others. Working with critical social theory requires a hefty dose of cynicism when looking at ‘educational’ theory particularly when this is ‘imported’ from the north and west. Calls for decolonisation made by movements such as #Rhodesmustfall and #OpenStellenbosch have focused on the content of the curriculum and called for the inclusion and acknowledgement of African knowledge. However, we would argue that pedagogy also requires a critique from a decolonial perspective. One example here would be the focus on so-called ‘learner centredness’ and ‘learner autonomy’ emanating from universities in the global north and west (and Australia) working with teaching and learning. A wealth of research produced within a Bernsteinian frame using Legitmation Code Theory (www.legitimationcodetheory.com), for example, shows that learners from what would be called ‘disadvantaged’ backgrounds require more, rather than less, direction from teachers with the result that so-called ‘learner centredness’ runs the risk of heightening their disadvantage further. Other work (see, for example, Ellery 2016) has shown how difficult the attainment of the learner independence much valued by academics actually is and how it is actually about an identity shift rather than the acquisition of a set of neutral skills as the literature so often seems to assume.   If we are to listen to the calls for decolonisation (and it would be very unwise not to) then pedagogies constructed as ‘best practice’ in the literature dominated by the north and west need to be engaged with critically and interrogated in relation to their fitness for purpose on the South African context. This requires high levels of expertise in Teaching and Learning Centres which is not always available. One of the most notable achievements at Rhodes University has been the development of high levels of academic expertise in CHERTL which, to a large extent, is fed by a vibrant PhD programme.  All too often, the development of academic staff as educators requires staff developers to confront dominant discourses constructed as ‘common sense’. This requires sensibility and the ability to take academics on as equals. This has profound implications for the staffing of Teaching and Learning Centres.   1. ii) The need to embed development activities in the structures of the University rather than leaving them ‘free-floating’. For example, staff appointed to permanent, Council funded positions at the University are placed on probation for three years. Performance against a number of criteria related to teaching and learning needs to be demonstrated during this period before the appointment is confirmed at the end of the three years. This is done through the submission of a teaching portfolio which requires academics to reflect on what they do in the context of the criteria and to provide evidence that they do actually do what they say they do. Portfolios are assessed by peers appointed by the Faculty in which an academic works and who are noted for their work in teaching and learning.   Support for the development of academic staff in their capacity of teachers is provided by the Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching & Learning (CHERTL). The Centre offers an orientation programme twice per year for new staff members. It also offers a course, Conversations around Teaching and Learning (CATALyst), which runs over an entire semester and which provides a more indepth look at issues related to teaching and learning for new academics. In addition, the Centre offers a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education. Attendance at these formal academic development activities is not compulsory. However, many academics choose to enrol in the CATALyst course and even in the PGDip because of the support provided by these courses for the meeting of probationary requirements. Staff development is thus linked to a reward (the confirmation of appointment) in a structured manner.  In a similar fashion, staff applying for personal promotion need to provide evidence of their performance against a set of criteria related to teaching and learning. This evidence is provided in the form of a reflective, evidence based portfolio. The portfolio submitted for processes related to confirmation of appointment can thus be extended and elaborated through the length of an academic career and used to support an application for personal promotion. The courses offered by CHERTL serve a similar function in relation to personal promotion as they do in probationary processes.  Over the years, the linking of staff development and concern for teaching and learning to reward structures has paid dividends. Initial resistance to the need to build a teaching portfolio has all but disappeared. The assessment of teaching evidence has become increasingly rigorous and tenure and personal promotion have been withheld even at the level of full professor to individuals who have not met the criteria.  2.2 During Phase 1 of the QEP, what changes at institutional level (a) have been made, (b) are in progress, or (c) are in the planning stages that relate to enhancing academics as teachers?  We have not changed our approach to the development of academic staff as educators. However, the protests of 2015, especially in the early part of the year drew our attention to the increased need to work with the de-colonisation of the curriculum. As a result, work done by CHERTL in its staff development capacity has been cognisant of the need for i) the development of awareness of decolonisation and ii) an exploration of the forms it could take. This is a philosophical shift in our understanding of what constitutes appropriate staff development work rather than a structural change.  2.3 Provide one or more (but not more than 5) exemplars to illustrate specific aspects of the changes that are successful. Provide evidence for claims of success. Where an activity is in the planning stages, indicate what evidence will be collected.   1. CHERTL staff members have begun to read widely in the literature on decolonisation in order to inform their staff development work. To this end, a collection of resources entitled ‘Resources from the Global South’ is being built on the online learning platform, RUConnected. Access to this site is restricted but could be provided on request. 2. From the beginning of the second term of 2015 a fortnightly seminar series entitled ‘Curriculum Conversations’ was initiated. This series involved academics presenting on teaching initiatives which they believed could contribute to decolonisation in sessions which began at 17h00. Over the three remaining terms of 2015, a total of seven ‘Conversations’ were held often with several academics presenting in each session.   The following ‘Conversations’ took place:   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | No | Date | Departments of academics presenting | | 1. | 11 May | Psychology, Information Systems | | 2. | 25 May | Drama, Botany | | 3. | 8 June | Statistics, Extended Studies | | 4. | 27 July | History, Institute for Water Research | | 5. | 17 August | School of Languages | | 6. | 14 September | History | | 7. | 28 September | Philosophy, Mathematics |   A site for the ‘Conversations’ was created on the University’s online learning platform. Access can be provided on request.  We are aware that this forms a different approach to staff development than the ‘linked in to structures’ approach advocated above. However, it should be noted that the initiatives identified in this section serve to deepen understandings of what could constitute the decolonisation of the curriculum which could then be used to inform, for example, the development of criteria for teaching and learning.  2.4 Provide one or more (but not more than 5) exemplars of changes that have not been successful and suggest reasons.  We have only made changes described in 2.3 above.  2.5 If possible, identify one or more promising practices related to this focus area. Describe the practice and provide evidence for success. Suggest what the key features might be.  i) The involvement of mainstream academics in the assessment of performance against teaching and learning criteria rather than leaving this to specialist committees or centres. Over the years, the number of academics involved in evaluating the work of others as teachers has grown with an increasing number of individuals willing to serve as assessors. Performing an assessment of the work of others is itself a developmental activity since it allows insights into what is being done elsewhere. Key to the practice is the use of two assessors for each set of evidence. This allows for the challenging of judgements and for extending understandings of what could constitute performance against criteria.  2.6 Identify the main challenges the university still faces in relation to this focus area.  Undoubtedly our main challenge is in finding individuals with the qualifications, experience and expertise to work with the development of highly qualified academic staff as educators. A doctoral level qualification is necessary although we do have experience of developing colleagues at doctoral level. In the current environment, finding someone who can walk straight in and work with members of the academic staff in order to develop their capacity as educators is extremely difficult as our experience of recruitment for vacant positions has shown. Our awareness of the shortage, across the entire country, of people with the expertise and competence to work in Teaching and Learning Centres in strategically meaningful ways has led us to develop a variant of the PGDip especially designed for such candidates. This awareness is derived from the experience of needing to recruit for our own posts and also because of our work across the entire sector.  Staff members from CHERTL provide support for the development of academics as educators across the South African higher education system. Requests for work far exceed the capacity available and it can be very difficult to balance the need to provide support at Rhodes University with requests from further afield. |

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| **3. FOCUS AREA 2: ENHANCING STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT (suggested length 10-20 pages)**  ***Includes: career and curriculum advising, life and academic skills development, counselling, student performance monitoring and referral.***  This section of the report should make reference to all of the sub-topics listed above, either by discussing them individually or by integrating them. Note: it is not necessary to respond to each of the questions below for every sub-topic. |
| 3.1 Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in enhancing student support and development.  As indicated in our baseline submission to the QEP, Rhodes University does not subscribe to a ‘conventional’ student support system but has rather chosen to work with academic staff on pedagogy and course design in order to ensure that student development is ‘infused’ into mainstream teaching and learning. Key to this approach is the understanding that student development best takes place in the context of the disciplines with which they have chosen to engage.  As also indicated in our baseline submission, we have long run a tutorial system across all departments and all faculties. In Science, students are supported in practical sessions by demonstrators. We consider the tutorial and ‘prac’ systems to be integral to our approach to teaching.  We also aim to provide quality learning environments in order to support quality teaching and learning. Our teaching venues are maintained by a Facilities Office and staff are available during teaching hours to attend to problems with audiovisual and computer equipment in lecture venues. Facilities are overseen by a sub-committee of the Teaching and Learning Committee which receives a budget for upgrade and maintenance of teaching facilities.  3.2 During Phase 1 of the QEP, what changes at institutional level (a) have been made, (b) are in progress, or (c) are in the planning stages that relate to enhancing student support and development?  No changes have been made specifically because of the QEP. Rather, additional initiatives have been made possible thanks to Teaching Development Grant Funding. Programme 6 of the Grant (Special Projects) has allowed us to introduce a number of initiatives detailed below.  3.2.1 The Writing Intensive Course Project (WIP) aims to build support for the development of writing in mainstream classes. The project is dependent on academics teaching a course or portion of a course to incorporate practices intended to develop writing in their work. The WIP also allows for the annual ‘Unzip your Knowledge’ Show for first year students which is based on the *RULearning Guide* (See Appendix I). The ‘Unzip’ Show is a piece of educational theatre which dramatises, and thus makes overt, practices conducive to academic learning and particularly to writing.  3.2.2 Augmenting courses have also been introduced in the Faculty of Science. Following practices in Extended Programmes, an Augmenting Course provides tuition which is additional that offered by mainstream lecturers to students. The availability of these courses provides an alternative route through the Faculty for students. Existing routes are the regular three year curriculum and the Extended Programme. The availability of Augmenting Courses means that Deans can offer students a slower and more supportive start to a regular curriculum.  3.2.3 Teaching Development Grant funding has allowed us to employ ‘Academic Trainees’ in Accounting. Academic Trainees in Accounting are interns who have chosen to undertake part of their training as Chartered Accountants in universities. The scheme is intended to introduce young accountants to the academic profession and to encourage them to consider the possibilities of an academic career. Academic Trainees support teaching in the Department.  3.3 Provide one or more (but not more than 5) exemplars to illustrate specific aspects of the change(s) that are successful. Provide evidence for claims of success. Where an activity is in the planning stages, indicate what evidence will be collected.  3.3.1. As indicated above, the ‘Unzip your Knowledge’ Show forms part of the Writing Intensive Course Project funded by the Teaching Development Grant. In 2015, the Show was updated and produced for the second time. The Show aims make overt literacy practices that are both productive and unproductive of academic learning. It does this in a humorous manner incorporating song and dance. See  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhEyCUdFnn8>  Key to the Show is a question and answer session at the end of each performance during which menbers of the audience are able to ask questions of the cast ‘in character’. This allows the questioning to be more neutral than it might otherwise be. The quesiton and answer session is facilitated by a member of the academic staff.  Performances of the Show take place at the beginning of the second term. The reason for this is to allow students to have a taste of academic learning before they watch a performance as we believe what they see will make more sense if this happens. The *RULearning Guide* is distributed immediately after the Show and reinforces what students have seen on stage.  The Show has proved to be enormously popular. It is aimed primarily at first year students but, in 2014, so many senior students attempted to join the audience that campus security had to be called to manage the crowds queuing to get in.  In 2015, we aimed to further the impact of the Show by encouraging discussion groups in Halls of Residence. These were facilitated by academic reps on House Committees who had undergone a training session as part of their orientation to Committee work.  We remain committed to the Show which is now the object of an academic research project. A paper was presented on the Show at an international conference in July 2015 and a request has been made by the organisers of the 2016 ICED Conference which is to be held in Cape Town for the Show to be offered as a plenary session.  We would argue that the show represents an innovative practice in the development of academic literacy in a country where literacy interventions are often founded on ‘shaky’ understandings of theory which fail to appreciate the nature of academic reading and writing as social practices which require individuals to take on ‘new’ ways of being (see Boughey, 2013[[1]](#footnote-1) for further explication of this point).  3.3.2 Three courses in the Faculty of Science have been augmented: Cell Biology 101, Earth Science 101 and Chemistry 1. As the following table obtained from the University’s Data Management Unit shows, the courses are proving to have an impact on success rates in the Faculty with the exception of Chem 102 in 2014 which shows a drop in the success rate.   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **2013** | | | **2014** | | | | **Subject** | Written | Passed | Success | Written | Passed | Success | | **Cell Bio** | 337 | 279 | 82,79% | 359 | 330 | 91,92% | | **Chem 101** | 348 | 251 | 72,13% | 380 | 308 | 81,05% | | **Chem 102** | 291 | 244 | 83,85% | 324 | 308 | 80,25% | | **Earth Sci**  **101** | 183 | 150 | 81,97% | 199 | 171 | 85,93% |   3.3.3 We collect student performance data on an annual basis for Accounting. We do not have data for the 2015 academic year yet as all students were granted supplementary exams in order to try to compensate for disruptions during the protests of October 2015. These supplementary exams will only begin in late January 2016. Student performance data for 2013 & 2014 appears below. A marked improvement is discernable. The Department of Accounting have made changes to curricula and pedagogy in this time. This means that the improvement in the performance data below cannot solely be attributed to the appointment of academic trainees. However, the Department would argue that the work of the trainees has impacted significantly on the data.  **2013: November**  ENROLLED | 1 | 2A | 2B | 3 | F | DPR Pass Firsts  DNW  Accounting 101 360 72 50 80 122 35 1 90% 90% 20%  Accounting 102 227 14 10 48 87 66 2 70% 70% 6%  Accounting 112 153 9 7 29 57 46 5 66% 67% 5%  Accounting 1f (Half Course) 43 7 2 19 11 4 0 90% 93% 16%  Accounting 1g (Half Course) 37 0 0 6 22 9 0 75% 78% 0%  Accounting 201 157 18 8 21 31 73 6 49% 50% 11%  Accounting 202 138 36 13 38 27 24 0 82% 83% 26%  Accounting 3 175 7 7 29 60 72 0 58% 59% 4%  Accounting 4 (HDAC) 73 0 0 9 33 30 1 57% 58% 0%  **2014: November**  ENROLLED | 1 | 2A | 2B | 3 | F | DPR Pass Firsts  DNW  Accounting 101 369 20 32 117 128 71 1 80% 80% 5%  Accounting 102 241 26 26 69 72 41 7 80% 80% 10%  Accounting 112 151 38 16 38 44 12 3 90% 90% 25%  Accounting 1f (Half Course) 40 1 3 17 12 7 0 82% 85% 2%  Accounting 1g (Half Course) 38 0 1 11 13 13 0 65% 68% 0%  Accounting 201 176 12 14 20 50 76 4 54% 55% 6%  Accounting 202 145 12 8 32 40 53 0 63% 64% 8%  Accounting 3 156 6 3 29 68 47 3 67% 68% 3%  Accounting 4 (HDAC) 71 2 2 6 32 27 2 59% 60% 2%  3.4 Provide one or more (but not more than 5) exemplars of changes that have not been successful and suggest reasons.  3.4.1 Take up of opportunities in relation to the Writing Intensive Course Project has not been as abundant as we might have hoped and the development of actual initiatives have often been quite fraught. The Project employs a co-ordinator who has a doctoral degree focusing on academic writing. The Project is based on theory and research produced in the field of New Literacy Studies which argues that i) literacy can only be acquired in context over a period of time and cannot be taught in formal classes ii ) literacy practices are socially embedded and, thus, context dependent iii) literacy is therefore a multiple rather than a singular phenomenon.  The Project allows lecturers of mainstream courses to work with the co-ordinator to identify an intervention which will support students’ literacy development in the particular disciplinary area. Projects could involve the provision of ‘writing respondents’ or individuals who will provide comment on a first draft of a piece of work with the goal of contributing to its development. Respondents are trained and comment is aimed at fostering processes of meaning making in academic contexts and not linguistic form. In this sort of initiative, the co-ordinator would work with the academic to develop an appropriate task and associated assessment criteria.  Clearly, the Project is dependent on mainstream lecturers to devote time and energy in their teaching to the development of literacy. The extent to which individuals are willing and able to do this varies across the board because of workload and other commitments including the need to research.  The intention at the outset of the Project was to build a ‘ladder’ of Writing Intensive courses in Faculties as writing demands change according to levels of seniority. Over time, however, we have seen a focus on interventions at first year level.  All the work produced in the field of New Literacy Studies shows that the development of literacy is complex, is only achieved over time and must be achieved in context. This makes stand alone literacy courses questionable. Nonetheless, they are probably the most common intervention in South African higher education in spite of the fact that they are ineffective and philosophically untenable. This is arguably because our system tends to rely on anecdotal understandings of teaching and learning, which are discoursively reproduced, to generate good practice rather than looking to the rigorous research that is available. These courses nonetheless remain the most common intervention in South African higher education. Our experience of working with the Writing Intensive Project shows that nurturing a project which aims to support literacy development in context is very difficult and requires great skill on the part of the co-ordinator. We remain committed to the Project but appreciate that it will it does not bear fruit which are easy to pick.  3.4.2 We have identified augmenting courses in the Faculty of Science as an initiative which we believe has impacted on success rates. Records show, however, that attendance at the augmenting sessions has not always been consistent. From 2016, therefore, attendance and preformance on tasks set in the augmeting portion will be a DP requirement for any student registered for the augmenting course. This tightening up on requirements gives the additional tuition more legitimacy and affirms the actual status of the course.  3.5 If possible, identify one or more promising practices related to this focus area. Describe the practice and provide evidence for success. Suggest what the key features might be.  3.5.1 The *modelling* of literacy practices as evidenced in the ‘Unzip your Knowledge’ Show.  3.5.2 The need for additional tuition to be structured into DP requirements. The validity of *ad hoc* student support has been questioned since the 1980s. As indicated above, Rhodes University has long offered a tutorial system across all discplinary areas and in all courses. Attendance at tutorials and the performance of tutorial tasks is a DP requirement. We have indicated that we have now introduced a DP requirement in relation to the augmenting portion of augmeting courses in the Faculty of Science. We believe that student support needs to be conceptualised as part of mainstream learning and structures into the curriculum rather than simply offered as an ‘add on’. This necessitates involvement from academics at the level of conceptualising the curriculum and in development teaching materials and assessment tasks.  3.6 Identify the main challenges the university still faces in relation to this focus area.  In many respects, the protests of 2015 turned the idea of student support on its head. In the past, dominant discourses have constructed student support in relation to an understanding of intellectual progress divorced from issues of identity and students’ ‘being’. In 2015, protesters told us very clearly that their ‘being’ is intricately related to their intellectual advancement and that, in historically white liberal institutions at least, their intellectual progress, as constructed by those institutions, requires them to assume a ‘white mask’. The understandings raised by the protesters have always existed in student support discourses in South Africa. The concept of ‘literacy’, for example, has certainly been understood by many practitioners as involving issues related to identity (see, for example, Boughey 2013). This is a minority position however since dominant discourses have appropriated the concept in order to neutralise and normalise the changes required at an individual level if people from some social groups are to demonstrate mastery of the dominant literacies of the academy.  Rhodes University has long prided itself on having some of the best success rates in the country. If we look closely at those pass rates, however, we can see that, while some groups of students pass their courses, they do not thrive. As we move into the future, this means that we need to interrogate the nature of what it means to thrive at Rhodes University and ask questions about who gets to thrive and for what reasons.  Answers to such questions will have implications at a systemic level and not only for ‘traditional’ student support structures such as the tutorial system and projects funded by the Teaching Development Grant but for the mainstream curriculum and the way it supports students. |

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| **4. FOCUS AREA 3: ENHANCING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**  **(suggested length 10-20 pages)**  ***Include: teaching and learning spaces, ICT infrastructure and access, technology-enabled tools and resources, library facilities.***  This section of the report should make reference to all of the sub-topics listed above, either by discussing them individually or by integrating them. Note: it is not necessary to respond to each of the questions below for every sub-topic. |
| 4.1 Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in enhancing the learning environment.  Our main considerations in relation to the learning environment relate to the need to provide high quality teaching venues, a library of international standing and an ICT infrastructure which will support teaching and learning as well as research needs.  As indicated in our baseline submission, we are challenged to provide teaching venues and have tried to mitigate the need for more space through innovative projects such as the Commerce Curriculum Project which looked at the possibility of replacing face to face teaching in a traditional venue with other sorts of teaching. DoHET infrastructure funding has allowed us to construct a new Life Sciences building and a new School of Languages building over the past 18 months. Both of these new buildings provide teaching and office space.  We have attempted to manage the venue shortage by using spaces in the residence system as learning spaces and, indeed, by striving to make the residence system itself a ‘living-learning’ system.  The University has a very well run ICT infrastructure. Challenges relate to access to computers for personal use. Although there are public computer laboratories on campus, students’ preference is for access to a personal device and access to one continues to mark social difference on campus. We have tried to manage this by placing more computers in residences, especially those which are at a distance from computer laboratory facilities. All residence rooms have an internet connection and the ‘digsnet’ system makes it possible to access the University’s internet in certain buildings in town. The Vice Chancellor is currently exploring ways in which the University could contribute to extending internet connections into the town more widely. Access to the internet for teaching and learning purposes therefore remains a key element of our understanding of what it means to provide a quality learning environment.  The highly significant role of the University’s residence system in creating an environment conducive to learning was noted in the previous submission to the CHE. We continue to acknowledge this role and to strive to obtain funding to build more residences without which growth in student numbers is likely to be limited given problems related to the availabilty of suitable accommodation in Grahamstown.  4.2 During Phase 1 of the QEP, what changes at institutional level (a) have been made, (b) are in progress, or (c) are in the planning stages that relate to enhancing the learning environment.  Increasingly staff are turning to ICTs to enhance their teaching. Uptake of the University’s Moodle-based learning platform has increased during the first cycle alongside that of Camtasia, a tool which allows for teaching to be recorded. We are aware, for example, of attempts to make short video recordings of laboratory techniques as well as the use of ‘mini movies’ where a lecturer talks to a concept which is illustrated in some way, perhaps by the drawing of a graph or the use of some other visual aid.  Other staff members are turning to social media for their teaching, developing Facebook pages and using Twitter accounts.  For some years now, the University has experienced difficulty in the staffing of its Educational Technology Unit with the co-ordinator only being available for a 5/8 position for some time now. In 2015, the resignation of the co-ordinator allowed us to recruit a new full-time co-ordinator. The mandate given to the new appointee is to explore the use of ICTs beyond what we understand to be the fairly ‘static’ learning platform of RUConnected. ICTs and their use in teaching and learning are developing very quickly and we feel that we need to become more aware of current trends. The new apponteee took up her position on 1 Jan 2016.  In 2015, a new postgraduate residence was completed. This new structure offers a flexible room configuration system which allows students some preference in the way living and kitchen facilities are shared. At the same time, a decision was made to establish the post of Warden of Postgraduates in the residence system. This post will be occupied by a senior researcher who will be available to draw on his extensive experience in research as he interacts with students.  4.3 Provide one or more (but not more than 5) exemplars to illustrate specific aspects of the change(s) that are successful. Provide evidence for claims of success. Where an activity is in the planning stages, indicate what evidence will be collected.  We do not have examples from the last twelve months but can cite the following in relation to the use of ICTs:   1. the use of short recordings in which a lecturer explains a concept (for example, ‘inflation’ in Economics) in her own words. The recordings are uploaded on to the online learning site and are available to students to download on any device including a cell phone. It appears that students use these recordings to supplement their reading of definitions in a text book and will often listen repeatedly. Our understanding is that this constitutes a new literacy practice (Street, 1984) which incorporates students’ preference for oral communication in conjunction with their need to engage with written academic text. Evidence of the success of this innovation is seen in the number of downloads from the site alongside requests from students for more recordings about an increased number of concepts. 2. We also have evidence of success (captured in, for example, teaching portfolios) of the use of recordings of lectures. It appears that students appear to value these recordings which they can view repeatedly as their studies progress. Again, we would see this as a developing literacy practice incorporating oral with written texts.   4.4 Provide one or more (but not more than 5) exemplars of changes that have not been successful and suggest reasons.  None  4.5 If possible, identify one or more promising practices related to this focus area. Describe the practice and provide evidence for success. Suggest what the key features might be.  We subscribe to a position which sees literacy as a set of socially embedded practices (Street, 1984) and literacy as a multiple, rather than a singular, phenomenon. This means that there are many literacies on campus as students develop literacies as a result of previous social experiences. Many of these literacies privilege oral communication. The academy however privileges engagement with and production of written text which is limited in support for meaning making. Success in disciplinary areas requires the mastery of the literacies they privilege. Students therefore need to demonstrate their ability to engage with and produce written texts as they progress through the undergraduate curriculum.  Promising practices link oracy with literacy through the use of ICTs as indicated in 4.3 above in order to foster the development of dominant disciplinary based literacies. The availability of oral texts supports meaning making in relation to written texts and scaffolds students’ mastery of the dominant disciplinary based literacies.  4.6 Identify the main challenges the university still faces in relation to this focus area.  Our challenges in relation to teaching venues continue.  In addition, we face challenges related to access to personal computers and tablets for financially needy students to the extent that such access becomes a marker of social difference. The problem with providing such access relates to funding as the University has no money in its usual budgetting processes to fund such an initiative.  Yet another challenge relates to the ablity of the local Municipality to provide services to the campus. In recent years, we have faced a water crisis and the signs now are that sewerage is increasingly becoming a problem  A report by the CSIR shows that the infrastructure of the campus suffers from a maintenance backlog to the tune of billions of rands. Historically, funding has been taken from maintenance to fund other needs. This is now becoming a crisis point. In 2015, millions of rands needed to be spent on new electrical switchgear on campus because of safety concerns. Roofs of buildings have also needed serious maintenance. Funding from the DoHET has allowed us to construct a new Life Sciences building, which includes teaching space, and a new School of Languages. In addition, we have added to our residence building programme.  Finally, the protests of October 2015 imposed severe challenges on our residence system. The campus was barricaded for the week beginning 19 October 2015 with the result that no vehicular access to campus was possible. Although foot access was possible, many students felt ‘trapped’ in the residences. The night of Thursday 22 October saw protesters visiting residences en masse and, in some cases, forcing non-protesting students to come outside to join the protest action. Wardens found themselves in an extraordinary position of responsibility at this time and, since then, some have voiced concerns about their willingness to continue to work in the residence system. We rely on wardens to provide stability in the system and to work in their residences to foster the living learning environment envisaged fro the system overall. Only time will tell whether possible further protests will impact on the wardens willingness to continue to occupy their positions. |

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| **5. FOCUS AREA 4: ENHANCING COURSE AND PROGRAMME ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT (suggested length 10-20 pages)**  ***Includes: admissions, selection, placement, readmission refusal, pass rates in gateway courses, throughput rates, management information systems.***  This section of the report should make reference to all of the sub-topics listed above, either by discussing them individually or by integrating them. Note: it is not necessary to respond to each of the questions below for every sub-topic. |
| 5.1 Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in enhancing course and programme enrolment management.  Rhodes University offers a number of formative degree programmes (for example, B.A. and B.Sc.) and a small number of professional programmes (for example, the B.Journ and B.Pharm). Entrance is therefore to the degree programme.  The general formative degrees along with the size of the university and the ‘curricuulm rules’ allow considerable freedom in curriculum choice with students being able to build a curriculum across a wide range of disciplinary areas and even to take subjects offered by faculties other than the one in which they are registered provided the timetable allows. We value this opportunity for our students as we believe it adds to the richness of the learning experiences offered to them at Rhodes University. We believe that this flexibility in our curriculum structure is very unusual in the South African system and is one which is valued by our students and, as ongoing research[[2]](#footnote-2) is showing, offers them considerable benefits.  As advisors, Deans and other senior members of the Faculty are involved in the choices students make as they construct the curriculum which will lead to the achievement of a general formative degree. Students must consult with Deans or their representatives during a ‘curriculum approval’ process. This consultation ensures that the choices students make are sound, in the sense that they can actually lead to the achievement of a degree, and also that students’ abilities and interests are served.  At first year level, the actual curriculum approval process is preceded by introductory talks given by Deans and departmental representatives. Students also receive advice on curriculum choices in the residence system from wardens and sub wardens.  Engagement with Deans and their representatives is also understood to be important when students have not done well in the subjects originally chosen. Students may need to ‘recover’ a route towards a degree and Deans and their representatives are understood to be best placed to look at past preformance, identify strengths and weaknesses and advise on a way forward.  Curriculum approval at all levels is thus understood to be an *academic rather than an administrative process.*  5.2 During Phase 1 of the QEP, what changes at institutional level (a) have been made, (b) are in progress, or (c) are in the planning stages that relate to enhancing course and programme enrolment management.  No changes have made to curriculum enrolment management.  5.3 Provide one or more (but not more than 5) exemplars to illustrate specific aspects of the change(s) that are successful. Provide evidence for claims of success. Where an activity is in the planning stages, indicate what evidence will be collected.  N/A  5.4 Provide one or more (but not more than 5) exemplars of changes that have not been successful and suggest reasons.  N/A  5.5 If possible, identify one or more promising practices related to this focus area. Describe the practice and provide evidence for success. Suggest what the key features might be.  We believe strongly in the involvement of senior academics in the curriculum approval process. Academics understand the curriculum in ways which administrators do not. More senior academics also have in-depth experience of dealing with students and of watching their progress.  5.6 Identify the main challenges the university still faces in relation to this focus area.  We have identified and acknowledged the value of the freedom of choice given to students in making the curriculum choices involved in building a programme leading to a general formative degree. This does, however, place a restriction on the extent to which enrolment at course level can be controlled and limited. If, for example, a student is accepted to do a B.A. degree at Rhodes University and plans to take Legal Theory as a major we would not be able to limit entrance to Legal Theory 1. In general, numbers for the courses on offer do not vary widely. Given the model espoused by the University, any problems related to student numbers would have to be managed through resource allocation rather than course enrolment.  Nonetheless, our awareness of growing numbers in disciplinary areas in the Social Sciences in particular has led us to welcome the development of new courses in the School of Languages and the Department of Philosophy although these courses were not developed because of this. From 2016, the Department of Philosophy will offer a semesterised course entitled IiNtetho Zobomi which aims to foster students’ ethical engagement with problems characterising contemporary South African society. A second semesterised course in the School of Languages, entitled Languages and Cultures in Africa, will also offer students an alternative heavily subscribed courses in Sociology, Politics and Anthropology. We envisage that this widened range of courses in the Social Sciences will relieve pressure on disciplianary areas experiencing high student numbers. |

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| **6. REFLECTION ON PHASE 1 OF THE QEP (suggested length 2-6 pages)** |
| 6.1 What has been the effect on the university of participating in the QEP for the past two years?  We have sent representatives to all workshops and other events. Attendance at the workshops has been cited as beneficial by participating academics because of the way their attention was drawn to what was going on at other South African universities. One group of participants at an early workshop did mention, however, that they felt silenced in the proceedings as their experience at a relatively well resourced and well run historically white university was so far removed from that of their colleagues at other institutions that they did not feel able to offer comment on practices at their home institution.  To a very large extent, any development which has taken place in the focus areas has been driven by the availability of funding in the form of the Teaching Development Grant. This is particularly the case for Focus Area 2: ‘Enhancing Student Support and Development’.  We were well aware of the need for a co-ordinated response to the enhancement of teaching and learning before Vincent Tinto’s visit to South Africa. We had also already introduced many of the practices associated with the ‘institutionalisation’ of the development of academic staff as educators before the workshop facilitated by Dr Thomas Olsson.  6.2 In what ways did the university’s involvement in the QEP promote or strengthen collaboration with other universities on specific issues?  Before the QEP began, staff from the Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching & Learning already worked with other universities across South Africa on the enhancement of academic staff as educators – i.e. on Focus Area 1. This work has involved offering workshops on areas such as assessment, accredited using the University’s Short Course Policy, and on offering a PGDip in Higher Education programme to academics from across the system[[3]](#footnote-3). In addition, for some years now, we have also offered a specialised version of the PGDip for practitioners in Teaching and Learning Centres. This version aims to develop participants’ strategic competence to work with the enhancement of teaching and learning. The DoHET funded an intake of this programme in the 2014 & 2015 academic years.  Staff from other universities across South Africa are also registered for doctoral study in our Higher Education Studies Doctoral Programme.  We have not made links with other universities specifically because of our involvement with the QEP. We enjoy good relationships with other sister institutions in the Eastern Cape and are always willing to collaborate and share.  6.3 Looking back over the past two years, in a page or two, summarise the university’s main triumphs, improvements, changes and challenges related to the four QEP focus areas.  We do not feel we have anything to add in addition to what has been noted above. |

1. Boughey, C. (2013) ‘What are we thinking of? A critical overview of approaches to developing academic literacy in South African higher education.’ *Journal for Language Teaching,* 13(2): 25-42. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. An ongoing NRF funded research project led by Professor Jenni Case of the University of Cape Town is demonstrating this point. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. CHERTL staff members offered short courses at the following universities in the course of 2015: the University of Venda, the Sefako Makgatho HSU, Mangosuthu University of Technology, the University of Limpopo, Walter Sisulu University, the University of Zululand. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)