**Quality Enhancement Project**

**Institutional Report: Phase 1**

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| **Name of Institution** | UNIVERSITY OF VENDA |
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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** |
| *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.*  It should be stated from the outset that the majority of issues addressed by the four focus areas of the first phase of the QEP were already addressed in the 2012-2016 strategic plan of the University of Venda, and had found their way into the projects submitted to DHET for funding through the Teaching Development Grant (TDG). Quality enhancement of teaching and learning at Univen is implicit, but also spelled out in specific actions and targets, in the operational plans and performance contracts of the Deans of the eight academic Schools, as well as the Director of the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning (CHETL), the Director: Library Services, and the Director: Community Engagement. ICT support for teaching and learning (hardware and software as well as training) is provided by the ICT Directorate, which resides in the Operations Division. Two e-learning practisioners in CHETL co-ordinate the ICT/academic interface in the roll-out of e-learning on the Blackboard e-learning platform. The QEP substantially informed the core strategic objective of Quality Teaching and Learning in Univen’s new (2016-2020) strategic plan.  Although task teams were appointed to drive enhancement actions in the four focus areas of the QEP during 2014, as reported in the 2014 interim institutional report, this was subsequently seen as cumbersome in view of the fact that all academic leaders were in any case engaged in the relevant enhancement activities as part of the operational plans of their units. The disadvantage of this approach was that there was no formal engagement with students – although our best efforts to enthuse student leadership about participation in the QEP had earlier proved unsuccessful. The participation of student leadership in the QEP was identified as a challenge right from the inception of the QEP, certainly not only at Univen. However, one area in which students participated willingly and in large numbers was in the academic mentorship programme for first-year students, which formed part of the First-Year Experience (FYE) project at Univen. There was no direct student input into this report. Because of the cross-cutting nature of quality enhancement activities, they may be reported in more than one of the focus areas.  In view of the above, this report was collated by the DVC: Academic, drawing from the 2014 interim institution report to the CHE and from the 2015 annual performance reports of:   1. Dr. Nancy Mutshaeni (Acting Director: Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning, CHETL). Dr Mutshaeni provided an overview of CHETL’s academic development activities undertaken in the eight academic Schools during the period under review. 2. Mrs. Mushoni Mulaudzi (Director: Library Services). 3. Mr. Aluwani Tshisonga (Acting Director: ICT Services) 4. Prof. Vhonani Netshandama (Director: Community Engagement) 5. Prof. Edward Nesamvuni (University Registrar) |
| **2. FOCUS AREA 1: ENHANCING ACADEMICS AS TEACHERS**  ***Includes: professional development, reward and recognition, workload, conditions of service and performance appraisal.*** |
| *Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in enhancing academics as teachers in one or two paragraphs.*  At Univen, research output and postgraduate supervision have traditionally outweighed the effective delivery of the curriculum as measures of academic excellence and criteria for promotion, largely because the former are easier to quantify. In addition, not all academics are naturally good or even willing teachers. The imperative to improve undergraduate throughput and success not only institutionally but at the national level, has led to increased efforts to offer professional development opportunities for academics not only to hone their skills as teachers but to obtain relevant, formal teaching qualifications. Within Univen’s particular context of underprepared first-entering students, poor staff:student ratio’s and inadequate teaching infrastructure, the establishment of the Centre for Higher Education, Teaching and Learning (CHETL) in 2010, as the custodian of academic staff development for the enhancement of teaching and learning at Univen, was a watershed event in this regard. The recruitment and retention of specialised academic development practisioners in CHETL, and its *effective* intervention in staff academic development (as well as student academic support) constitute a significant, ongoing challenge.  Unlike the other comprehensive universities, whose comprehensive offerings have been mediated by their mergers with former technikons and technical colleges, Univen is in the process of restructuring its PQM in order to meet the comprehensive mandate by developing novel career-focused, undergraduate diplomas and certificates. The ministerial “size and shape” target for Univen with regard to student enrolments by qualification type is that 4% of undergraduate enrolments should be in these qualifications by 2019. The offering of career-focused qualifications present particular teaching and learning challenges, including an emphasis on effective work-based learning. Academics involved in the development and offering of these programmes accordingly need appropriate academic development support.  The major issue Univen attempts to address within this focus area, primarily through the operations of CHETL, is the professional development of academics through:   * acquisition of formal teaching qualifications in higher education * institutionalized induction programmes for new academic staff * capacitating academics in the modalities of career focused education * training academics in e-learning and mixed-mode offering of curricula in order to deal with large classes * academic skills training (e.g. assessment training)     Reward and recognition for excellence in teaching has only recently (2013) been introduced, with the former Vice-Chancellor’s Research Excellence awards now also recognising best practise in teaching. The appraisal of teaching portfolios as part of the performance management of academics is a developing issue, while some strides have been made with the use of student feedback to develop teaching ability and effectiveness.  The University of Venda regards itself as a leader in the provision of specialised teaching and learning support for students with disabilities – especially blind or partially sighted students, given the relatively large incidence of albinism in our region and amongst our students. A small, specialised unit in CHETL provides learning support to these students and training in specialised teaching methodology to their lecturers.  **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**  (*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?)*  Phase 1 of the QEP saw increased utilization of funding from the Teaching Development Grant to assist academics with obtaining formal teaching qualifications. In the absence of in-house offering of the PGDHE, academics attended PGDHE training at several other institutions:   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **University** | **Number of Academics** | **year** | | Cape Town | 4  1 | 2014 (completed)  2015 (completed) | | Stellenbosch | 11 | 2015 (completed) | | Rhodes | 13  13 | 2014 (completed)  (final portfolios submitted) |   In addition to the above, five academics from the School of Health Sciences completed the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Professional Education at the University of Cape Town during 2014 and 2015.  **Appointment of a career-focused education practitioner**  A career focused practitioner was appointed in CHETL in January 2015, with the specific task of advising academic departments involved in the development of career-focused diplomas and certificates and offering appropriate training for academics involved in the offering of such programmes. On the 9th of June 2015, a task team for career focused education representing each School was established with the assistance of the School Deans.  The focus in 2015 was primarily on the School of Law, the School of Agriculture and the School of Environmental Sciences with regard to their career focused diploma programmes. These three Schools have self-identified potential new programmes in niche areas wherein Univen enjoys a competitive advantage. CHETL also collaborated with the Directorate for Community Engagement in planning and hosting a major Work Integrated Learning (WIL) workshop at Univen, to sensitise academics about the growing need to identify work-based learning opportunities for students in our local communities, industries and businesses.  CHETL engages with the academic Schools on an ongoing basis to assist with the development of new career focused programmes, in accordance with the comprehensive mandate and the University’s 2016-2020 strategic plan.  **Appointment of teaching assistants**  Thirty one (31) Teaching Assistants were appointed in 2015, primarily to assist with teaching and assessment of courses with large student enrolments.  **In-house training of academic staff by the Academic Development Unit of CHETL)**  There were three credit bearing courses that were offered to academic staff members in 2015, namely, Assessment and Moderation, Curriculum Development, and Teaching for Learning in Higher Education. With regard to assessment and moderation, 22 academics attended the workshop from 13-17 April 2015. The Curriculum Development Course was attended by 16 academics during workshops that took place between 18-22 May 2015. Fourteen academics attended the workshop on Teaching for Learning in Higher Education on 28 September 2015 and 02 October 2015.   |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | **Training** | **Date** | **No. of trainees** | | Assessment and Moderation in Higher Education | 13-17 April 2015 | 22 | | Curriculum development in higher Education | 18-22 May 2015 | 16 | | Teaching for learning in higher Education | 28 September- 02 October 2015 | 15 |   **Adapted Technology workshop for lecturers**  On 11 August 2015, three staff members from the Department of Mathematics and one staff member from CHETL’s Disability Unit were trained in educational access technology for students with disabilities. The training was for the lecturers who were teaching students with disabilities using Bellman Audio Domino. The target group was selected because they were directly involved in teaching students with hearing impairment.  *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.*  A successful intervention has been to focus on particular programmes offered at Univen and providing targeted academic support and training, to achieve the particular outcomes required by the programme. Such support involves all academics involved in the offering of the particular programme, as opposed to the uneven attendance of training by academics when it is offered in an unfocused, across the board manner. The University of Venda started offering the B.Com (Accounting) degree in 2014, in partnership with the University of Johannesburg and in line with the strict requirements of the professional body (SAICA). The programme is supported by Thuthuka. Targeted academic development support was delivered by CHETL through the facilitation of an intensive off-campus workshop, during which a teaching and learning model, which speaks to the specific needs of the accounting students in the Thuthuka programme, and an appropriate learning guide was developed.  Accounting programmes generally struggle to maintain academic performance levels and the high pass rates required by SAICA, but the targeted academic support intervention had positive results at Univen and can be replicated for other professional programmes.  **Table 1.** Performanceof accounting students receiving targeted support  **1st year performance**   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Module** | **2014** | | | | | **2015** | | | | | Enrolled | No. passed | Pass % | Average  Marks% | Enrolled | | No passed | Pass % | Average  % | | Accounting 1 | 50 | 43 | 86 | 68 | | 100 | 80 | 80 | 56 | | Economics 1 | 50 | 50 | 100 | 68 | | 100 | 92 | 92 | 65 | | Bus. Mgt. 1 | 50 | 37 | 74 | 60 | | 100 | 64 | 64 | 56 | | Communication Skills 1 | 50 | 48 | 96 | 62 | | 100 | 95 | 95 | 60 | | Mathematics 1 | 50 | 50 | 100 | 75 | | 100 | 85 | 85 | 69 | | Commercial Law 1 | 50 | 47 | 94 | 59 | | 100 | 78 | 78 | 60 |   **2nd** **year performance**   |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Module** | **2014** | | | | **2015** | | | | | Enrolled | No. passed | Pass % | Average  % | Enrolled | No. passed | Pass % | Average  % | | Accounting 2 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 48 | 35 | 73 | 52 | | Financial Management 2 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 48 | 38 | 79 | 53 | | Auditing and Governance 2 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 48 | 38 | 79 | 55 | | Taxation 2 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 48 | 41 | 85 | 54 | | Commercial law 2 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 48 | 46 | 96 | 65 | | Business Information Systems 2 | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | 48 | 45 | 94 | 69 |   The progression rates for the 1st year and 2nd year levels are 79% and 69% respectively.  **REWARD AND RECOGNITION**  **Vice Chancellor’s Excellence Awards in Teaching and Learning** **(including engaged teaching and learning, facilitated by the Community Engagement Directorate)**  Academics who participate in the VC Excellence Awards in Teaching and Learning are mentored on portfolio development until submission by staff development practitioners in CHETL. In addition, staff development practitioners act as panel members, with the relevant Deans, HOD’s, peers and student representatives, for a panel review of the submitted portfolios of academics from the different Schools. Candidates for the awards are evaluated and scored based on the submitted portfolios, with only candidates who score 75% and above receiving a teaching excellence award. The 2015 awards ceremony, followed by a festive lunch, took place on 31st of July 2015 at a venue off-campus (2Ten Hotel in Sibasa).  **Awards are given per post level, with the following categories awarded:**  Junior Lecturer - Mr Munienge Mbodila (Science Foundation, Computer Science)  Lecturer - Mr Tendai Chari (Media studies)  Senior Lecturer - Dr Ndileleni Paulinah Mudzielwana (Early Childhood Education), Dr Mwavuhohova Hilda Shilubane (Advanced Nursing Science) and Dr Jabulani Gumbo (Hydrology and Water Resources)  Associate Professor – Prof. JH Jacobs (Economics) and Prof AP Kutame (Education)    The awards in Community Engagement were in seven categories. Professor P Bikam received an award of Excellence in Engaged Teaching and Learning; Professor J Francis received an award of Excellence in Community-Engaged Research; Mr V Nekhuvhi and Dr D Tinarwo equally received an award of Excellence in Social Responsiveness Programmes and Community Partnerships; Ms E Ramaite also received an award of Excellence in Social Responsiveness Programmes and Community Partnerships; Professor V Sankaran received an award of Excellence in an Outreach Programme, as well as the Public Responsibility Medallion.    **WORKLOAD**  The absence of an academic workload model at Univen was identified by our internal auditors as an important strategic risk during a risk assessment exercise undertaken in 2015. It was therefore included in the 2016-2020 strategic plan as one of the drivers of the delivery of quality teaching and learning at Univen, with a 2016 deadline for its implementation. The DVC (Academic), with the assistance of the MIS Officer in the Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance Directorate, is responsible for implementation and monitoring of the workload model.  Benchmarking with Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) and the University of the Free State (UFS) was undertaken during 2015. MUT implemented their model in 2014 and it appears to be appropriate for adoption, with modifications, by Univen, given some salient similarities between the two institutions.  By all accounts a contentious matter everywhere, the development and implementation of an academic workload model at Univen has already given rise to contestation between Schools in terms of the allocation of time for research and teaching respectively. Staff:student ratios differ markedly between Schools, ranging from *ca*. 1:60 in the School of Law to *ca* 1:20 in the School of Agriculture. The workload of Deans and academic HOD’s is also difficult to align to a single norm since their positions are collegial and not substantive.  In spite of considerable challenges with refining and implementing an academic workload model at Univen, it will be prioritised and finalised during 2016.  **CONDITIONS OF SERVICE/PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL**  Although executive and senior managers at the University of Venda have been subjected to annual performance appraisals since 2010, the performance management system was only rolled out to other levels in 2013.  Academic staff are required to compile a portfolio of evidence for the appraisal of their teaching, with a strong emphasis on the quality of study materials they provide and the evaluation of their teaching by students. Increasingly, their uptake of e-learning – e.g. in terms of their own training, the digitising of their study materials and the utilisation of online assessment – is being factored into their performance indicators.  The most significant change in this aspect of the focus area has been the automation of teaching evaluation. Students evaluate the teaching of modules towards the end of each semester and although student evaluation forms part of the teaching and learning portfolios of academic staff, it is not yet universal nor compulsory. It is an ongoing educational process at Univen: firstly, to encourage students to participate and to assure them of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses; and secondly, to introduce it gradually as a compulsory component of performance appraisal. In 2015, online evaluation of teaching by students was introduced. The capturing and analysis of evaluation data are done using Remark software, which creates reports in the form of descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, variance, standard error etc.) that are graphically depicted. The evaluation software converts files of scanned data into formats compatible with other commonly used packages, such as SPSS, Microsoft Access, Excel and Lotus. A scanner and lecturer evaluation forms were purchased and the Academic Development Unit staff members from CHETL were trained in the use of the Remark software on 30th March 2015.  An online evaluation system has also been development as a result of a collaboration between the University of Venda, University of Witwatersrand and University of Limpopo. A summary of activities undertaken in 2015 is given below:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Activity** | Dates | | **Training of Academic Development Staff** | 30th March 2015 | | Project Initiation Meeting | 19th and 20th of February 2015 | | Requirements Gathering Meeting | 26th of February 2015 | | Requirements Management Meeting | 29th May 2015 | | **System Presentation** | 11th November 2015 |   The system has two sets of questions: a core set of questions which will be the same for all universities, and another set of questions decided by each school or department to satisfy discipline specific quality or evaluation needs. The system was successfully developed and will be piloted in the first semester 2016.  (*Identify the main challenges the university still faces in relation to this focus area).*  Two major challenges still present themselves at Univen: the refining of its academic performance management system in order to ensure fair, consistent and transparent appraisal of especially the teaching portfolios of academics, and academic progression for academics appointed in “support” directorates like CHETL and Community Engagement. The latter is an issue that is not confined to Univen. During our participation in the QEP it became clear that institutional HR policies very often mitigate against academic promotion for practitioners in academic development units. Being a scarce skill in the South African higher education context, this leads to high mobility of academic developers, problems with their attraction and retention, and their migration into “proper” faculty positions. |

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| **3. FOCUS AREA 2: ENHANCING STUDENT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT**  ***Includes: career and curriculum advising, life and academic skills development, counselling, student performance monitoring and referral.*** |
| *(Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in enhancing student support and development).*  The experience at the University of Venda mirrors exactly the finding of several analytical studies of student success, at other universities and nationally, namely that success at first-year level is the best indicator of subsequent academic success. The transition from school to university may be particularly problematic for many first-entering students at Univen who come from under-resourced rural schools, where major parts of the curriculum are either not taught or delivered inadequately (e.g. practical work in the physical and life sciences, due to the absence of functional school laboratories; or the advanced mathematics tested in the “third paper” of the NSC final assessments, due to the lack of teaching capacity). Under-preparedness of first-year students therefore remains the first major challenge at Univen and most student support activities target our first-entering students.  Student enrolments at Univen have grown steadily and slightly ahead of the ministerial targets set out in the DHET size and shape directives, due to the demand pressures faced by all South African universities. Physical infrastructure and the academic staff component of the university have not grown concomitantly (Fig. 1). An almost fifteen year hiatus in the development of new physical infrastructure – in particular lecture halls and other teaching facilities, as well as student housing – was only broken under the leadership of the current Vice-Chancellor, during which time (the past nine years) more than R500 m of new infrastructure was added, with a strong focus on student accommodation. However, teaching and learning spaces are still woefully inadequate and have been prioritised for future infrastructure spending. Overcrowding in traditional fixed-bench lecture theatres – as opposed to flexible learning spaces, which are far more conducive to effective, interactive teaching and learning – remains the norm at Univen. There is also a firm management commitment to limit future growth in staff numbers at Univen to the Academic Division, with a 10% annual growth in lecturing staff over the next five years supported by Council.  In view of the above, it is inevitable that the second major challenge faced by Univen in this focus area is the teaching of large classes – which is exacerbated by poor pass rates in several first-year gateway courses, leading to enrolments in such courses often exceeding 800 students, with repeaters vying with new entrants for quality teaching. The early identification of students at risk and increasing the pass rate in gateway courses are therefore major challenges the university attempts to address within in the QEP context.  The introduction and full roll-out of e-learning at Univen is seen as the major thrust to improve success and throughput rates. In 2015, Univen became the first South African university to issue a tablet device to each one of its ca. 13 000 undergraduate students at the time. The sustainability of the funding model for these devices has been compromised somewhat by the #feesmustfall movement that befell universities towards the end of 2015. The issuing of the devices followed upon the 2014 acquisition of the Blackboard e-learning platform and is seen as an essential component of the enhancement of teaching and learning at Univen.  Figure 1. Growth in student and academic staff headcounts, with trend lines, over the past eight years at Univen.  **CAREER AND CURRICULUM ADVISING**  Career and curriculum advising is carried out by a specialised unit within CHETL. Its function and effectiveness is currently under review.  **LIFE AND ACADEMIC SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**  The Beginning University Survey of Student Engagement (BUSSE) was conducted as soon as students arrived on campus in 2015. Its major purpose was to evaluate first entering students’ experiences prior to joining an institution of higher education. This included academic and co-curricular experiences and their expectations regarding participation in educationally purposeful activities during their first year at a tertiary institution.  The orientation of first-entering students at Univen has become increasingly effective over the past two years, especially in terms of ensuring full participation in the orientation programme. Participation in the library orientation programme in 2015 is an indicator of this success, with close to 100% of all first-entering students undergoing the orientation (see table below).   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **SCHOOL** | **REGISTERED STUDENTS** | **ORIENTATED STUDENTS** | **DIFFERENCE** | | **Agriculture** | 124 | 124 | 0 | | **Education** | 620 | 610 | 10 | | **Environmental Sciences** | 368 | 370 | -2 | | **Health Sciences** | 271 | 276 | -5 | | **Human and Social Sciences** | 761 | 745 | 16 | | **Law** | 219 | 217 | 2 | | **Management Sciences** | 635 | 620 | 15 | | **Maths and Natural Sciences** | 455 | 451 | 4 | | **TOTAL** | **3453** | **3413** | **40** | | **PERCENTAGE** | **100%** | **99%** |  |   The First-Year Experience (FYE) programme at Univen has the intended purpose of providing first-year students with specific resources and support, to allow for a successful transition and acclimation to the higher education learning environment. A new project at Univen, which has not yet been implemented fully, it was piloted in 2015. The main purpose of the First Year Experience programme at the University of Venda is:   * To obtain a contextual understanding of the experience of UNIVEN first year students. * To improve students’ performance inside the classroom by building learning and study skills as well as values outside of the classroom . * To build the marketability of UNIVEN graduates through CV enhancing experiences. * To train the body, creating a more balanced student.   Some of the FYE activities that occurred in 2015 are listed below:   * ***The 1st FYE Conference at the University of Johannesburg***   Attendance of the first FYE conference held at the University of Johannesburg in May 2015. One representative from the Centre attended the conference and its summit from 19-21 May 2015. This conference opened an opportunity for us to benchmark innovative ways of implementing this programme.   * ***Business Card Sized Student Directory and Flyer***   Contact details names of individuals for all directorates that deal directly with students were compiled into a business size card of which a total of 3000 were printed. They were disseminated to all first year students in the English Communication Skills (ECS) classes (ECS is a compulsory university-wide first-year module).   * ***Meetings and FYE Sessions***   Planning meetings were held with stakeholders for First Year Experience sessions to be piloted in 2015. In collaboration with the Community Engagement Directorate, ADU designed and planned FYE sessions that were piloted in 2015. However, challenges were experienced in this regard. Hence a new strategy is to be implemented in 2016. |

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| **4. FOCUS AREA 3: ENHANCING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**  ***Include: teaching and learning spaces, ICT infrastructure and access, technology-enabled tools and resources, library facilities.*** | |
| *(Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in enhancing the learning environment).*  The key issue for the University of Venda during Phase I of the QEP has been the roll-out of e-learning. Following the acquisition of the Blackboard e-learning platform in 2014, and the issuing of all first-entering students with a tablet device in 2015, the University has systematically been putting in place a holistic support infrastructure involving contributions from all its divisions (Registrar’s Division, Operations Division and Academic Division).  **TEACHING AND LEARNING SPACES**  In spite of more than R500 m spent on new physical infrastructure at Univen over the past eight years, the historical infrastructure backlog will take many years to eradicate. The new infrastructure includes four large lecture theatres with seating capacity of 150-300 each, but teaching and learning spaces remain woefully inadequate. Lecturing venues are traditional fixed-bench “theatres” that are not conducive to interactive teaching and peer learning, and are often severely overcrowded. However, new infrastructure for teaching and learning has been prioritised in the university’s long-term infrastructure plan and building of a new lecture complex, with more state of the art design, conducive to new modes of curriculum delivery, will commence within the next year.  **ICT INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACCESS**  A new Integrated ICT Masterplan for the University of Venda has been approved by Council to provide state of the art information systems utilising modern information technology throughout the university. All E-mails are now hosted in the cloud. A Wi-Fi network is being rolled out with 13 000 students receiving tablets. The new Smart Campus is designed to promote ease of use for all users, staff and students. The development, maintenance and operation of all systems requires competent staff and eight additional staff members were appointed to the ICT Department. In utilising electronic technology to conduct transactions with staff and with third parties, control aspects were given close scrutiny and procedures designed and implemented to minimise the risk of fraud and error. Univen effected full online registration and online payment for 2014 and testing was successfully completed on online application for implementation in 2015 for 2016 registration.  **Network Installation**  Fifty new network UTP points around campus were installed using Cat 6 Krone technology which offers a faster and more reliable service.  **Wi-Fi project**  The Campus Wi-Fi project has been completed in the identified areas. New fiber infrastructure has been rolled-out to all residential areas to ensure faster network access. A single mode 8-core fiber is installed in each residential area. The Power-over-Ethernet switches have been used to connect the Access Points in completing the phase of the Wireless LAN project. A total of 473 access points having been installed around campus. An average of 5,400 devices generate over 190,000 access requests to the internet every day through the University Wi-Fi system. To meet the growing demand for internet access the university has ordered a new RADIUS server to allow 25 000 devices on the Wireless LAN, since the current server’s capacity of 5 400 devices has already been exceeded.    **Figure 2**. Distribution of Wi-Fi access points on campus. Densest coverage at residences and library.  The worldwide Service Set Identifier (SSID) “**eduroam”** is also now set to broadcast on all APs around the Univen campus, allowing students, researchers and staff from participating institutions to obtain Internet connectivity across campus.    **Internal LAN**  The Univen Network infrastructure has partially upgraded Local Area Network (LAN) infrastructure in order to resolve bottlenecks caused by congested network traffic. The upgrade required installation and configuration of 86 new Power-over-Ethernet (PoE) Gigabit (1000mbps) switches across campus and the rollout of single mode fiber to 15 buildings around campus. More than 800 new network points have been installed around campus to connect new devices to the network. Cable management was conducted on 56 switch cabins and spaghetti was eliminated; the cabinets were then secured with locks, reducing the number of loops and possible network downtime and enhancing physical security.  **Network Security**  In its quest to provide a safe and secure network environment the ICT department has acquired two new firewall devices to function as an internet gateway and also perform functions such as web-content filtering, intrusion detection and remote secure connection. The two Firewalls are configured on high-availability, such that when one is down traffic is automatically routed to the other Firewall automatically.  **Data Centre Storage**  The University SAN storage was outdated, critical data was stored in an outdated infrastructure hence the upgrade. During the course of 2015 the University acquired a SAN storage with the capacity of 32 Terabytes an increased the storage capacity from 6 Terabytes available in the EVA4000 SAN storage or 533. 33 percent increase in storage space. Subsequent to the acquisition of SAN storage, Integrator 3 was completed and most of the university data assets were migrated to the 3Par SAN storage from the previous SAN Storage which was more than six years old and out-of-warranty, thus averting the huge risk of university data loss. The solution is scalable up to sizes of Petabytes. A new Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) system has also been installed at the Server room with a capacity of 160 KVA and running time of 3.5 hours.  With the implementation of this impressive technology the University is now prepared to meet its data storage needs; to digitize its processes and documents and to support the full roll-out of e-learning at Univen.  **TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED TOOLS AND RESOURCES**  **Blackboard e-Learning Management System**  **Blackboard Meetings held in 2015:**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Meeting date** | **Purpose** | | 16-01-2015 | *SIS Integration: Integration of ITS and Blackboard* | | 28-01-2015 | *Finalization of Content Development for first module* | | 28-01-2015 | *Finalization of Content Development for second module* | | 30-01-2015 | *Finalization of Content Development for third module* | | 12-02-2015 | *SIS Integration: Discussion of the Data Lifecycle Framework* | | 18-02-2015 | *SIS Integration: Discussion of Data Integration Dictionary* | | 24-02-2015 | *Blackboard Branding Customization (Login Page, Univen Color Themes)* | | 25-02-2015 | *SIS Integration: Discussion of Data Integration Dictionary (SQL Queries)* | | 02-03-2015 | *Consultation with lecturers for Content Development* | | 04-03-2015 | *Blackboard Branding Customization* | | 06-05-2015 | *SIS Integration: Agreement of Exact Feeds to be extracted from ITS (Student, Instructor, Course, Terms, Enrollments, Institutional Roles* | | 09-03-2015 | *Blackboard Branding Customization* | | 09-03-2015 | *Consultation with lecturers for Content Development* | | 10-03-2015 | *Consultation with lecturers for Content Development* | | 13-03-2015 | *Training of English Communication Skills lecturers* | | 24/27-03-2015 | *Training of English Communication Skills students* | | 13-04-2015 | *Train the Trainer Workshop* | | 14-04-2015 | *Blackboard Training for lecturers: School of Agriculture* | | 15-04-2015 | *Blackboard Training for lecturers: School of Law* | | 16-04-2015 | *Blackboard Training for lecturers: School of Environmental Sciences* | | 17-04-2015 | *Blackboard Training for lecturers: School of Health Sciences* | | 20-04-2015 | *Blackboard Training for lecturers: School of Human and Social Sciences* | | 21-04-2015 | *Blackboard Training for lecturers: School of Education* | | 07-05-2015 | *Strategic Review and Planning Meeting* | | 08-06-2015 | *Gradebook Extract Demo Demonstration Meeting with Blackboard ICM* | | 09-06-2015 | *Mapping the way forward for Univen Course Development for second Semester 2015* |   The following milestones in the Blackboard roll out were achieved during phase 1 of the QEP:  **Configuration of the platform**  *Branding:*  The Univen Blackboard URL is: <https://myuniven.univen.ac.za>. Background added:  - Email address for academic staff added: [elearningsupport@univen.ac.za](mailto:elearningsupport@univen.ac.za)  - Email address for student support added: [myuniven@univen.ac.za](mailto:myuniven@univen.ac.za)  *Secure Socket Layer (SSL) Certificate /Uniform Resource Link (URL) Option*  Following the selection of “myUniven” through an online popular vote amongst staff and students, an SSL certificate was implemented to accommodate the new URL: myUniven.Univen.ac.za.  **Strategic Planning**  Blackboard’s approach to strategic planning was to follow a structured methodology designed to assess Univen’s current capabilities for achieving online learning goals, and subsequently document Univen’s foundations of strength and areas for improvement. The following strategic plan was implemented:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Work Streams** | **Status** | | IT Infrastructure and Service Delivery (Service Login, SIS Integration) | Done | | Strategy and Governance (Integrate e-learning strategy in Strategic Plan, Deparmental Consultations) | Done | | Course Development and Baseline Provision (Blackboard Access, Course creation, Training, template development) | Done | | IT Helpdesk (Students and Staff) | Done | | User / System Administration Support | Done | | Staff Development and Academic Support | Done | | Communication (teaching resources available online) | Done |   **Student Information System (SIS) Integration**  Started in 2015 still continuing: linking ITS system to Blackboard to automate processes such as user account creation, course creation and mark transfer between ITS and Blackboard.    **Grade Extraction**  The Gradebook Extract Solution simplifies the transfer of data between the Blackboard Learn Grade Center and Univen’s ITS system. This minimizes the labor-intensive and error prone process of manual re-entry of data. The gradebook was installed on the Blackboard test site and production sites in 2015.    **Training**  One- on- one, departmental and mass training was conducted throughout the year, with the aim of integrating technology into the Teaching and Learning process with the necessary support provided.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Dates** | **Targeted Group** | | 13th March 2015 | English Department | | 13th April 2015 | Blackboard Administrators | | 14th April 2015 | Mass training of first batch of lecturers from different Schools | | 15th April 2015 | Mass training of lecturers from different Schools | | 16th April 2015 | Mass training of lecturers from different Schools | | 17th April 2015 | Mass training of lecturers from different Schools | | 20th April 2015 | Mass training of lecturers from different Schools | | 21st April 2015 | Mass training of lecturers from different Schools | | 13th – 15th October 2015 | Mass training of lecturers from different Schools | | 14th October 2015 | Mass training of lecturers from different Schools | | 15th October 2015 | Mass training of lecturers from different Schools | | 20th October 2015 | Mass training of lecturers from different Schools | | 21st October 2015 | Mass training of lecturers from different Schools | | January – October 2015 | Continuous Students’ Training in classrooms |   **Course Creation and Users Active Online**  The reports generated from Blackboard (below) show the number of users, courses and views from January to December 2015. By December 2015, 11 540 users were active on Blackboard, indicating a significant growth in the adoption of e-learning at Univen.      The statistics above show that active participation on Blackboard was mainly towards the exam period, with minimal participation at the beginning and end of the semester.    The number of page views declined from January to December, while it is evident that users were very active in September.  **Computer Assisted Language Learning (English Word Power)**  English Word Power is another online learning platform acquired by Univen to assist students to develop sound English word usage, grammar and tenses in their own time and space. The English Word Power Program was aligned with the English Communication Skills curriculum (the university-wide first-year module aimed at improving English language proficiency amongst first-entering students) and contributes 10 marks to the final mark; 3059 student accounts were created to date and mass training was conducted.  The screen grab below provides evidence of the success of this blended model of offering the English Communication Skills module to an entire first-year intake of >3000 students.    **Library electronic resources**  The Directorate: Library Services plays an essential role in supporting the e-learning roll-out at Univen. The library purchased 1 213 new e-journal titles and 10 852 new e-books which were added to the electronic resource database in 2015. The library also provides student training on the utilization of library e-resources. The figure below shows the growth in the number of students, including postgraduates, that was trained over the past three years.  **Audiovisual technology in support of teaching and learning**  Classroom Audio Technology (CAT) has been used effectively to enhance listening and learning environments in three of the six largest (200+ students) teaching venues on campus. Its installation in the rest of the large venues is a priority for 2016.  **Training for students with disability**   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | **Device** | **Date** | **Disability** | **No. of students** | | Topaz Desktop magnifier | 5/02/2015 | Partially sighted | 2 | | Smartview Desktop magnifier, |  | Partially sighted |  | | Pebble and IPAL Solo stand-alone scan |  | Partially sighted |  | | Blaze EZ. | 9/02/2015 | Partially sighted | 1 | | Plextalk. | 10/02/2015 | Partially sighted | 1 | | **Total** |  |  | **4** |   **LIBRARY FACILITIES**  The University of Venda Library underwent major refurbishment over the past five years, primarily in order to create an increased number of conducive learning spaces for students. The library is currently the only building on campus where dedicated spaces for group work and peer-learning exist. Uptake of the new spaces (group work rooms) was immediate and intense. A survey to determine the most common purpose for using the group work rooms showed a gratifying trend towards peer learning through disciplinary discussion groups (see figure below). | |
| **5. FOCUS AREA 4: ENHANCING COURSE AND PROGRAMME ENROLMENT MANAGEMENT**  ***Includes: admissions, selection, placement, readmission refusal, pass rates in gateway courses, throughput rates, management information systems.*** |
| (*Summarise what the university considers to be the key issues in enhancing course and programme enrolment management*)  Six challenges which hampered the rendering of a professional student academic administration service to the university were identified previously and summarised in the 2014 interim report to the CHE. These challenges have been addressed with varied success, but some still present areas of concern and are therefore retained as challenges in the revised (2016-2020) strategic plan. The 2010 Higher Education Quality Council audit report also raised an area of concern and a subsequent recommendation regarding the rigour and consistency with which academic rules are implemented at the university (HEQC recommendation 9: ‘The council recommends that the University of Venda give attention to consistency and transparency in the application of rules in order to safeguard the academic integrity of its qualifications’). Consistent and transparent application of its own academic rules governing student academic administration processes and strict adherence to these rules by all members of the university community are indeed crucial for maintaining not only the integrity of the processes but also of their outcome, namely the qualifications our students obtain from the university.  ***The following are regarded as key issues for Univen in this focus area:***  • For an efficient application, admissions and enrolment process: close cooperation and coordination between the student academic administration, the academic division, finance and the Communications and Marketing Directorate and strict adherence to calendar rules governing the process. **2 – 2 0 1 6**  • For effective management of examination processes and assessment records: close cooperation and coordination between student academic administration and academic and strict adherence to deadlines set well in advance in the academic year plan.  • For the correct higher education management information system data to be submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training for Univen to receive full and correct student subsidies: constant checking, validation and communication of data to internal stakeholders.  • Constant refinement and improved utilisation of the information technology system for capturing and managing student records and assessment data is crucial. By implication, increasingly sophisticated and effective information communications technology support by the Information Technology Service Directorate is required.  • A full and appropriate staff complement in student academic administration is a prerequisite to achieve the required level of service.  The above are essential conditions to address the following persistent challenges more effectively:   1. Inadequate recruitment of suitable candidates while they are still at school. 2. Online application. 3. Walk-in students. 4. Unreliable capturing of student data. 5. Timely capturing of student assessment data to make timely and effective academic support interventions possible. 6. Delays in the finalisation of examination results and supplementary examinations negatively impact on the enrolment plan. 7. Consistency and transparency in application of academic rules.   (*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).*  We have implemented an integrated management information system (MIS) utilising the Power HEDA software that was fully operationalised in 2015. The Power HEDA system is capable of continuously updating and reporting on HEMIS and operational data. Through the HEDA dashboards we can constantly monitor our headcount enrolments per school and drill down to departmental level. Some of the pertinent reports that come from MIS are cohort analyses which give an account of the throughput rates of multiple cohorts. The cohort analysis reports do not only indicate the throughput rates, but they also indicate the drop-out rates and stop-out rates within the stipulated period of study. As a result, the following have been achieved:   1. Downloading of NSC results from HESA. 2. Matching of results with applications. 3. Calculation of Admission Point Scores (APS) electronically. 4. Online application is now the norm and online registration is fully functional. 5. Greater adherence to academic exclusion rules. 6. Recruitment of suitable school leavers through marketing and the hosting of open days at the university. 7. The university has been able to reduce the number of walk-in students considerably. 8. Timely capturing of student assessment data has been achieved through greater monitoring and strict enforcement of submission deadlines by the Deans, as well as through training of academics in the use of I-Enabler to capture formative assessment marks and the formula for the calculation of semester marks electronically. Students at risk can now be identified from their first formative assessment results. |

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| **6. REFLECTION ON PHASE 1 OF THE QEP** |
| *6.1 What has been the effect on the university of participating in the QEP for the past two years?*  Participation in the QEP sharpened Univen’s strategic focus on quality teaching and learning and informed, to a significant extent, the relevant strategic objective and performance targets of its new 2016-2020 strategic plan. Although the focus areas of the QEP were to some extent foreshadowed by Univen’s own identification of problems around student success and throughput, and of the mechanisms to enhance them, having to engage with the QEP focus areas led to a more holistic view of how to achieve student success. This holistic view can perhaps best be summarised as an appreciation of the importance of enhancing ”the student experience” – i.e., how students experience their learning environment and the delivery of the curriculum – in order to improve pass and throughput rates, and to produce well-rounded graduates fit not only for employment but for life. It implies a student-centricity in the delivery of our core business which has hitherto been lacking both in concept and in execution not only at Univen but, we believe, also at other institutions.  *6.2 In what ways did the university’s involvement in the QEP promote or strengthen collaboration with other universities on specific issues?*  The collegial interactions between DVC’s responsible for Teaching and Learning during QEP meetings at the CHE created early opportunities for collaboration, benchmarking and the sharing of best practice – in line with the ultimate intentions of the QEP. However, existing collaborations were strengthened rather than new collaborations established; this is certain to change once examples of best practice are identified and communicated upon analysis of the institutional reports. |