

AN EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS OF REWARDING EXCELLENCE IN TUITION
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

by

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I declare that **AN EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS OF REWARDING EXCELLENCE IN TUITION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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SUMMARY

The aim of this research is to evaluate the process of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* at the University of South Africa. To achieve this aim an investigation was undertaken into (a) the strengths and weaknesses of the 2005 Awards process and (b) possible ways to improve it for the future.

The literature study sought to place the rewarding of quality teaching in the broader framework of international excellence in tuition awards, current criteria (both locally and globally) used in evaluating teaching in higher education, and principles of business process management. The qualitative investigation attempted to provide a contextual understanding of Unisa's experience of awarding excellence in tuition, through an exploration of the experiences of those who were directly involved in the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process at Unisa. The findings serve as basis for guidelines for future Awards processes.

KEY WORDS

Excellence
Teaching
Higher Education
Open and Distance Learning
Process Management
University of South Africa (Unisa)
Qualitative Research
Interviews

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study emanates from my personal involvement in and drives towards excellent teaching at the University of South Africa (Unisa). My academic career at Unisa began in 1985 when I was appointed as staff member in an academic department. My brief was to teach, do research and serve the community. I am still employed by the University, but in a different capacity than the initial one, namely that of learning developer in the *Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development (ICLD)*. It is the aim of this Institute to serve the lecturing staff of Unisa on a wide front of matters related to teaching and learning development. During my lecturing career of close to eighteen years (1985 to 2002) I had an intense interest in the teaching aspect of academia and attempted through continuous self-development of pedagogic skills, education qualifications and teaching competencies to enhance my lecturing endeavours. Because pedagogic training and skills are not prerequisites for a teaching position at this institution, it was therefore not always easy to convince colleagues of the value of furthering one's professional skills as a teacher in a context where the emphasis was mostly on discipline-related research. This could lead to possible tension between tuition and research¹.

Unisa is an open and distance education institution of higher learning and its history goes back to the late nineteenth century when it started out as an examining body. Unisa has evolved over the last century and a half from an examining body to a mainly correspondence type distance teaching institution to what it is today (2006), namely a dedicated comprehensive open and distance learning institution. Unisa's comprehensiveness refers to the fact that it merged with two other distance learning institutions during 2004. The merger was an attempt by the national government to streamline the higher education landscape in South Africa. Consequently the University of South Africa (Unisa), the Technikon South Africa (TSA) and the distance teaching component of the Vista University (VUDEC) merged to form one comprehensive institution. The merged institution is currently known as the University of South Africa,

¹ The tension between research and tuition surfaced during the interviews held with academics who submitted their work for the Excellence in Tuition Awards during 2005. This is therefore an important contextual reality to be kept in mind throughout the study.

and is often referred to as the “new Unisa”. The University therefore currently offers a wide variety of professional, practice-related, academic and general formative programmes to a student number that exceeds two hundred thousand. Open and distance learning at this institution implies a specialised teaching approach and philosophy and it is therefore of paramount importance that teaching excellence becomes part of the fibre of the “new Unisa”.

The idea of awarding excellent tuition may have been in the minds of like-minded teachers but it was never formally proposed until in 2001, when two members of the Tuition Committee of the former Faculty of Theology and Religion raised the issue and pursued it. The rationale behind the initiative was to reward high quality teaching in the same way as excellent research outputs are rewarded. Unisa has an elaborate system of peer review for research outputs and Unisa researchers are rewarded annually with either the Principal's Award or the Chancellor's Award. The idea of awarding excellence in tuition therefore had its precedent in the existing research awards.

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Since the merger in 2004, mentioned above, Unisa has undergone major structural changes. Faculties, with their respective academic departments have been reconceptualised and reorganised into Schools. A number of Schools constitute a College. For instance, the former Faculty of Theology and Religion, where the idea of a teaching award originated in 2001, became the School of Theology and Religion, situated in the College of Human Sciences. This background is important for this study since reference will be made to the way in which the Awards process was conceptualised during 2004, which on its part forms the backdrop to the investigation into the 2005 Awards process.

After the initial idea of an excellence in tuition award was tabled, a lengthy process ensued at a variety of managerial levels to formalise this idea. The concept was approved in 2003 by the Senate Tuition Committee and the *Unisa Excellence in Tuition Awards* was implemented for the first time during 2004. The Senate Tuition Committee is a standing committee of the Senate of the University and deals with matters of tuition on managerial level. The Committee is chaired by the Vice-Principal: Tuition and consists of heads of administrative and support departments that deal directly with affairs

related to teaching and students, as well as representatives from the Colleges – who often chair Tuition Committees in their respective Schools and Colleges².

The Senate Tuition Committee delegated the responsibility of organising the Awards on School and College levels to a task team. This task team consisted of members of the Senate Tuition Committee who represented their Colleges, as well as three staff members of the Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development (ICLD). Considering my interest in teaching matters, as well as being a member of the ICLD, I was elected as member of this initial task team of the Senate Tuition Committee with the brief of putting the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* initiative into practice.

Due to the absence of an official process to implement the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* henceforth, Colleges and Schools followed their own individual processes during that first year of implementing the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* (2004). The College of Human Sciences, for example, followed an elaborate and intensive process which included a task team to oversee the process. Evaluation criteria were designed, evaluation panels were set up and complete reporting of the process was done and tabled at the Senate Tuition Committee by the end of 2004 (see Appendix 1). Other Colleges in the University more or less followed an ad hoc approach to the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*, hence the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* were not approached in a uniform way.

An investigation into what other, mostly non-South African, universities were doing in terms of *Excellence in Tuition Awards* processes (see section 2.2 in the next chapter for more detail), made me realise that Unisa was in desperate need of a formalised process for awarding its teachers of excellence. Universities worldwide follow elaborate processes to award excellent tuition and many of them even have policies to formalise their processes.

The rationale for a study of the process followed during the second round of *Excellence in Tuition Awards* at Unisa (that is in 2005), therefore, includes the following:

- (1) Past mistakes needed investigation in order to be avoided in future;
- (2) processes needed to be subjected to a systematic and rigorous enquiry (see Mouton 2001:138);

² This is another important contextual reality for this study, since the Senate Tuition Committee acts as the driving force behind the Excellence in Tuition Awards at Unisa.

- (3) scientific investigation into the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process could perhaps reveal crucial elements for the formulation of a theoretical framework for awarding good teaching in an Open and Distance Learning environment and
- (4) the results of the investigation could contain elements needed to formulate a Unisa policy on *Excellence in Tuition Awards*.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem underlying this study is the unsatisfactory process followed thus far in the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* (starting in 2004 and continuing in 2005). Although 2005 saw a serious attempt to resolve problematic issues (see Appendix 2; see also later on in this section), the “reform effort” was not based on any scientific investigation into the 2004 experience. This study, therefore, focuses on the 2005 experience by investigating the processes followed during that year in an attempt to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the process in order to improve it for future use (2006 and beyond). The results of this investigation could serve as guidelines to prevent recurrence of the 2004/2005 problems in future.

Unisa's *Excellence in Tuition Awards* is an assessment mechanism aimed at rewarding the hard work that academics put into their teaching. In principle, it is comparable to the way academics are rewarded for excellent research. It should be clear from the introductory remarks and rationale for the study that the proposed study focuses on the process followed in such an undertaking.

Problems with the 2004 process (such as diverse methodology, mentioned earlier) led to difficulties in implementing the initiative optimally. The following specific problems were encountered and serve as examples of such difficulties and form the background for doing this study³.

Firstly, there were a number of delays in the process, mainly due to the inexperience of those who had to implement the process. This resulted in a cramming of due dates. This compelled academic staff who wanted to submit entries for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* to either rush the preparation of their submissions or not to submit them at all. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, processes across Colleges varied considerably. The

³ These are based on the author's experience of and reflection on the 2004 Awards process (see report to College of Human Sciences Tuition Committee in Appendix 1. This report was tabled during the Senate Tuition Committee meeting of 17 January 2005).

elaborate process followed in the College of Human Sciences was unique. Thirdly, some academics felt that they were not afforded sufficient time to reflect on or debate the philosophical underpinnings of the issue of awarding excellence in tuition. Consequently, some considered the matter to be bureaucratic. Fourthly, due to lack of procedural consistency, some academics decided not to enter for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* because they felt that they could not subject the evidence of their teaching efforts to an amorphous evaluation process. Consequently, excellent teachers withdrew from the process and in so doing missed out on an opportunity to showcase their work. Fifthly, limited opportunities existed for debriefing and reflection on the process. Only one report reflecting on the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process (that from the College of Human Sciences) served before the Senate Tuition Committee. Lastly, the processes that were followed during the 2004 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* were never the subject of rigorous debate and investigation on a university-wide scale. This investigation was undertaken against this background and experience.

There are a number of reasons for investigating the 2005 process rather than the 2004 one. The time lapse between the time of this investigation (February to November 2005) and the 2004 experience may have severely compromised the investigation, because those involved in the process may have forgotten the detail of their experience. Participants in the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* (academics who made submissions for the award and members of the evaluation panels) differed from 2004 to 2005. Furthermore, because very little process was visible in the majority of Colleges during 2004, it would be pointless to investigate that which did effectively not exist. Since 2004 there had been an attempt to learn from previous mistakes, and this implies that 2005 saw a much more deliberate process that could serve as observable object of analysis. An evaluation of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process at Unisa, therefore, forms the focus of this study.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two research questions emanate from the previous discussion, namely:

- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process?
- How did those who participated in the process think the process could be improved?

1.5 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The *Excellence in Tuition Awards* initiative continued during 2005. The task of developing a process was once more the responsibility of a task team of the Senate Tuition Committee. With the haphazard processes of 2004 still in mind, serious attempts were made to formalise the process throughout the University. The task team therefore went to great lengths to ensure representivity of all the Colleges, by including on the task team representatives from all five Colleges of Unisa (College of Law, College of Human Sciences, College of Agriculture and Environmental Studies, College of Economic and Management Science and College of Science and Engineering). Elements of the process that the task team discussed and negotiated with staff (via the College representatives on the task team) included: formulating evaluation criteria and constituting evaluation panels (how they should be constituted). The task team further consulted widely through its members and requested comments from all teaching staff on proposals made by the task team. The aim was, in the light of the disparity of the previous year, to both refine the process and to accommodate a variety of needs. The process implicitly contained the following three phases:

Phase 1: Planning phase

This phase involved the work of the Senate Tuition Committee task team which consisted mainly of defining the parameters of the process (this took place roughly between January to mid-April 2005).

Phase 2: Submission of teaching portfolios phase

This phase involved the preparation and submission of teaching portfolios by academic teaching staff (this took place roughly from mid-April to the end of June 2005).

Phase 3: Evaluation phase

This stage involved the evaluation of submissions (first internally and then externally). Experts in both subject content and Open and Distance Learning participated in the (internal and external) evaluation processes. This phase took place between July and October/November 2005.

It is clear from the previous discussion that the aim of this study is two-fold. Firstly, to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process, as experienced by those who were closely involved in the respective phases of the process. Secondly, the study aims at identifying ways to improve the process for future *Excellence in Tuition Awards* processes.

1.6 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

In this section concepts relevant to this research will be discussed, namely, “evaluation”, “excellence”, “teaching” and “process”.

1.6.1 Evaluation

Guba and Lincoln (1989) offer a comparative view of conventional types (or generations) of evaluation which they identify as measurement (of what was known to be true), description (of the extent to which students have achieved learning objectives) and judgment (according to standards). According to Guba and Lincoln (1989:31-38), these generations of evaluation suffer(ed) serious flaws, of which a tendency to managerialism, failure to accommodate value-pluralism and over-commitment to the scientific (positivist) paradigm of inquiry can be mentioned. In the light of these deficiencies, Guba and Lincoln (1989:38-45) offer an alternative approach to evaluation, and call it *responsive constructivist evaluation*. This evaluation subscribes to an interactive, negotiated process that is both interpretive and hermeneutic (dialogic and dialectic) and which takes the claims, concerns and issues of stakeholders in the evaluation process seriously. Guba and Lincoln’s fourth generation evaluation especially underlines an ontology that reminds of constructivism (Guba & Lincoln 1989:43), which denies the existence of an objective reality. Instead it asserts that realities are social constructions of the mind, and there are as many such constructions as there are individuals. Its epistemology suggests that there is an interaction between the observer and the observed and resulting from this is its methodology, namely a hermeneutic/dialectic process that takes advantage and account of the abovementioned interaction between observer and observed. This view of evaluation has certain consequences for the evaluation process (also the evaluation that this study claims to be doing) and therefore needs some further description.

Guba and Lincoln (1989:253-256) state the specific principles of this fourth generation evaluation type. These principles inform this study and will therefore be discussed briefly.

- Evaluation is a socio-political process that treats social, cultural and political factors as non-threatening to the evaluation process. All human activity is bounded and framed and therefore conscious awareness of such elements does not compromise the evaluation process. This study regards the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* at Unisa as bounded in a specific socio-political and cultural context which needs to be taken seriously.
- Evaluation is a joint collaborative process. Joint collaboration is aimed at the evolution of consensus about that which is being evaluated. Total agreement however is not possible and therefore multiple perspectives may be entertained. It is the joint aim, therefore, of this study to establish a variety of views regarding the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process.
- Evaluation is teaching/learning process. Stakeholders (this includes the evaluator) learn from each other as the evaluation pursues its course.
- Evaluation is a continuous, recursive and highly divergent process which remains open to challenge and which has no natural end point. It is therefore emphasised that this study is merely a “snap shot” of the evolving awards process at Unisa. More research on awards process beyond 2005 need to be undertaken.
- Evaluation is an emergent process, which means that its outcome (or even multiple outcomes) is unpredictable.
- Evaluation is a process that creates reality (and not findings or truths) or constructions of reality created by participants and stakeholders. This fact became evident from the interview held with participants (see chapter 4).

1.6.2 Excellence

A brief description of the nature of Unisa as a comprehensive, open and distance learning institution was given in the introductory remarks of this chapter. This feature forms the backdrop of the University’s drive towards excellence.

Unisa’s *2015 Strategic plan: an agenda for transformation* highlights as one of its internal challenges “a culture of accountability and performance management”. This is directly linked to the aim of the University, namely to establish itself as a leading provider of

world class higher education opportunities through open and distance learning, nationally and on the African continent. The entire *Strategic Plan* is permeated with issues of quality and excellence, with excellence in teaching being given its rightful place together with issues such as human resources, research and management. One of the characteristics of Unisa as a comprehensive institute for higher learning is, according to the *Strategic Plan*, “[M]ultiple modes of delivery and learner support based on open and distance learning methodologies primarily, and underpinned by learner-centeredness, but making use of appropriate information and communication technologies to enhance learning, and direct contact with students where practicable and necessary”. Although learning is the explicit theme here, it implies the type of teaching necessary to facilitate this learning, namely a student-centred, multi-mode teaching strategy. The emphatic *the* in Unisa’s vision, namely “Towards the African university in the service of humanity”, refers to the excellence that the University strives for. Excellence is furthermore explicated as one of Unisa’s values. The *Strategic Plan* explains excellence as “upholding high standards of aspiration in all our practices, with continuous attention to improvement in quality”.

Unisa’s aim, vision and values regarding excellence informs its mission, as set out in the *Strategic Plan*. It is part of Unisa’s mission to play a leading role in the South African society. We can relate this directly to the University’s teaching endeavours. Building on the concept of quality and excellence, Unisa therefore seeks to provide quality general academic and career-focused learning opportunities, address the needs of a diverse student profile and cultivate and promote an intellectual culture and educational experience that is conducive to critical discourse, intellectual curiosity, tolerance and diversity of views. The Unisa Tuition Policy echoes this ideal by stating that the University is committed to developing a scholarly culture of teaching. The University is consequently committed to empower its lecturing staff to meet internationally-accepted academic standards of teaching. Unisa regards it as imperative to provide lecturers with professional learning opportunities that offer a variety of perspectives on open and distance teaching. It should be clear how directly related this is to teaching excellence. It is only through quality teaching that these elements of Unisa’s mission and its tuition policy can be realised.

The *Strategic Plan* concludes by identifying and discussing ten strategic objectives, together with their key strategies. Number ten of these strategic objectives reads: “Establish a performance-oriented approach to management, promote quality assurance, and assess outcomes and reward productivity and excellence”. This strategic objective is

directly relevant to this study. It is therefore explicitly mentioned in the *Strategic Plan*, namely that to realise this objective the strategy will be “[T]he promotion of excellence in teaching ...”. Therefore, whenever the term “excellence in tuition” is used in this study the abovementioned context and connotation ought to be kept in mind.

The drive towards excellence in open and distance teaching is also visible on national level, with the *National Association of Distance and Open-learning Organisations in South Africa* (NADEOSA) being one of the main role players. NADEOSA assists government structures, such as the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) in ensuring the quality of distance teaching. The HEQC is the quality assuring body for all public and private higher education institutions in South Africa. NADEOSA has supplemented the HEQC criteria for quality in higher education to ensure that open and distance learning institutions (such as Unisa) are provided with benchmarks for quality education (Welch & Reed nd, see section 2.3.6 in the next chapter for more detail).

1.6.3 Teaching

Teaching in higher education has become a complex endeavour. The days when the university lecturer was simply a discipline specialist seem to have become something of the past. Therefore, one needs to consider higher education teaching not in a naïve and simplistic manner, but as a complex and multi-faceted undertaking. This is the way in which teaching will be understood in this study.

The complexity of teaching in the higher education environment is evident from the South African Council on Higher Education’s (CHE) *Criteria for Accreditation of Programmes* (2004). The South African Higher Education Act (No 101 of 1997) assigns the responsibility for quality assurance in higher education to the CHE, who discharges this responsibility to its permanent sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The context of this drive for quality in higher education is the restructuring and transformation of the education system in South Africa. South Africa has seen an education system characterised by decades of fragmentation, uneven provision and racial segregation (CHE Framework for Programme Accreditation 2004). Restructuring and transformation of the higher education landscape in South Africa is therefore part of the demand for social and economic justice and the demand for democratic change in South African society. Quality-related goals therefore include increased access and equity opportunities for previously marginalised groups, greater responsiveness to local, regional and national needs, resulting in increased throughput,

retention and graduation rates in academic programmes. In order to facilitate this transformative agenda the HEQC has formulated a set of quality-related criteria that play a crucial role in the execution of the HEQC's functions. These criteria serve a dual purpose. Firstly, it is an evaluative tool for the HEQC audits of institutions of higher learning and secondly it sets broad benchmarks for quality management and teaching arrangements in higher education.

A close study of these criteria reveals that teaching in higher education (which includes distance education) is a complex and integrated affair. It becomes progressively clear that the university teacher is, apart from being the traditional subject specialist (see Criterion 3), also a planner (Criteria 1 and 12: designing new teaching programmes), a human resource manager (trainer tutors for a programme), a mentor (Criteria 11 and 16: supporting students in acquiring skills such as reading, numeracy and other cognitive skills), a specialist in information communication technology (ICT) (Criterion 1: making sound decisions concerning ICTs), an assessor (Criteria 6 and 13), a quality assessor (Criterion 17: monitoring the effectiveness of learning programmes), an educationalist (able to formulate a personal educational philosophy) and a life-long learner (Criterion 5: willing to be trained in matters beyond his/her discipline field) (CHE Criteria for Programme Accreditation 2004).

It is within this context that the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* operates. The criteria used for assessing the submissions of lecturers include all these facets of teaching (and more, due to the distance education environment) and therefore reflect the multi-dimensionality of the teaching enterprise.

1.6.4 Process

The concept of 'process' was first introduced by Adam Smith in the late eighteenth century in a task-oriented job context and referred mainly to the division of labour. This view was severely criticised during the twentieth century with the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes (Kim & Ramkaran 2004). According to these authors, the premise is that if a process is broken down into small and simple tasks, their sum may not achieve the intended or desirable performance of the unbroken process. The term *Business Process Management* is used for this perspective. Process management is, according to Ongaro (2004:81), "a managerial approach characterised by the focus on business process as the criterion used by top management ... for the organisational design and the assignment of managerial responsibilities". This approach

to management has proved to be relevant for the implementation of reform initiatives aiming at customer-orientation and inter-organisational co-ordination. Ongaro (2004:84-87) further explains the key characteristics of process management and mentions the following: diffusion of a culture oriented to processes; identification of process owners who are responsible for process performance; integrating hierarchical lines of management with a systematic orientation to core processes; reshaping of relationships among organisational units according to the pattern of supplier-customer relations and, finally, delegation and team work, through the establishment of process teams who manage the interconnections of the different phases of the process (see section 2.4 in the next chapter for a more detailed discussion).

Bawden and Zuber-Skerritt (2002) compare traditional management styles with current ones, and state that traditional management, on the one hand, was product-orientated and suffered from an inflexibility and lack of adaptability to changing circumstances. Current management styles, on the other hand, also recognise the importance of processes that produce the product. Adaptability involves innovation and creativity and leads to processes that are effective for harnessing the potential inputs in harmonious ways. An important reason for this shift is, according to these authors, the human factor that now assumes pre-eminence as a factor of production. Bawden and Zuber-Skerritt note that this style of management also pervades in higher education institutions all over the world.

The essence of adaptability to change is the willingness to learn (Bawden & Zuber-Skerritt 2002:133). Here learning involves

- propositional learning or being informed by an authority,
- practical learning or being told by an authority how to do something and
- experiential learning or making sense of something happening around us, also referred to as meta-learning.

These authors report that in the organisations they were involved in, they mostly encountered propositional and practical learning, with little room for experiential learning opportunities. They therefore conclude that “[O]ne particular way to develop meta-learning in organisations is through processes management” Process management, to these authors, is a social learning process that helps groups to identify and clarify their goals and the means to achieve them. It further seeks to empower participants through

implementing and facilitating a process designed to meet organisational purposes. The process focuses on relationships rather than on tasks and is therefore value based.

The term “process” in the context of this study is therefore more than a means to an end, namely the product, but an end in itself.

1.7 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES

Fouché and Delport (2002:265) urge qualitative researchers to select a paradigm that highlights their point of view or frame of reference. Such a model serves to organise one’s observations and reasoning. Following the four main assumptions to which this paradigm is related, as suggested by Creswell (quoted in Fouché and Delport 2002), I will highlight the following as a personal frame of reference or point of view⁴: (1) on the nature of reality; (2) on the relationship researcher/researched; (3) on the process of research and (4) on the role of values.

1.7.1 The nature of reality

I support the notion that reality is multi-faceted and therefore complex. This is mainly because reality is seen as a set of related (systemic) elements. Furthermore, reality reflects the features of a human environment, which in effect means that people create reality. It will become clear from the interviews that people describe their reality through explanation and reflection.

1.7.2 The relationship researcher/researched

I regard myself as a learner who learns from others. It should be clear from my views on reality that I subscribe to a divergent type of epistemology, which means that there are many options of arriving at “knowing”. The result of this research is therefore an attempt to make meaning. As researcher my insights are limited to my perspective on the problem. Interviews have been designed in such a manner that participants are regarded as actively involved in the meaning-making work of the researcher.

⁴ These paradigmatic perspectives are largely based on Guba and Lincoln’s (1989) views on evaluation and form the backdrop to much of the discussion in chapter 3 on Research Design.

1.7.3 The process of research

There are many ways to research a problem and specific problems dictate certain methods. For this study a methodology that suits the research problem was therefore followed (see chapter 3 for a detailed account of the research methodology followed in this study). In the execution of methods, the researcher should be truthful, unbiased, honest and fair to all and act with integrity. This is especially true of qualitative research where human beings participate in the investigation. It must be noted that research results should reflect reality in all its complexity, yet be systematic and rigorous. I subscribe fully to this view.

1.7.4 Values

As researcher I subscribe to the quality of teaching which is linked to the view that academic freedom is not divorced from accountability. Processes within which people operate should be defined in such a way that they enhance effectiveness and develop human capacity. It is the aim of this study to enhance the process that awards academics for excellent teaching. This study consequently “lives” this value.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

From the discussion so far it is probable that the type of research strategy to be followed in this study is that of the *case study*. Fouché (2002:275) quotes Creswell on the definition of a case study as being an explanation or in-depth analysis of a “bounded system” (bounded by both time and/or place). It may be a single or a multiple case. A process is cited as an example of such a *case study*. The case study gives the researcher the opportunity to learn; in this instance to learn from those participating in the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process about its efficiency or inefficiency and ways to improve it. This study could further be typified as an *intrinsic case study*, which, according to Fouché (2002:276) focuses on a better understanding of the individual case. The *Excellence in Tuition Awards* at Unisa was treated as a single case and therefore an object of study.

Purposive sampling was employed. The fact that participants needed to have been particularly involved in the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process was a crucial criterion for this case. Three groups of people qualified and a sample was chosen from them. The three groups were firstly, members of the Senate Tuition Committee task

team, secondly academics who submitted their teaching portfolios for evaluation and thirdly, members of the internal evaluation panels⁵. It was envisaged at the outset of the investigation that three to four people from each of the mentioned groups would be sampled to be interviewed by the researcher. This figure of between nine and twelve people should therefore be sufficient for this investigation. However, the criterion of *saturation of information*, and not necessarily the size of the sample, would remain paramount in the study.

A *qualitative approach* was followed. Interviews with participants in the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process took the form of *semi-structured interviews*, which can be described as interviews organised according to areas of particular interest, while still allowing a considerable amount of flexibility in scope and depth (Greeff 2002:298). The semi-structured *interviews* focused on the following three questions, which constituted the areas of particular interest to the researcher:

- (1) What about the process worked efficiently?
- (2) What did not work? and
- (3) What do you recommend to improve the process?

A rigorous and systematic method was devised to *record data*. This included audio taping interviews, labelling data gained from the interviews and taking down personal notes (De Vos 2002:340). *Analysis of data*, that is the process of ordering, structuring and interpreting the mass of collected data (De Vos 2002:339) took place firstly, formatively, that is, while interviews were underway – in order to redesign questions where necessary (De Vos 2002:341), and secondly, summatively, that is, a formal analysis occurred after collecting all data, with the aim of ensuring a detailed, fine-grained analysis of all data. The *qualitative report* will be in the form of a master's dissertation of limited scope. Criteria for good report writing, as set out by Delpont and Fouché (2002:357-359) will be adhered to as closely as possible.

⁵ These three groups from which the sample was selected correspond with the three phases followed in the 2005 Awards process, as discussed under section 1.5 above.

1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The division of chapters follows a simple, yet logical order.

Chapter 1 is an orientation to the study and sets out the background and reason(s) for the investigation, as well as the aims of the study, the definition of concepts, the researcher's paradigmatic stance, as well as the research methodology followed in the study.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature relevant to the investigation. This forms the theoretical framework that informed the study.

Chapter 3 discusses the research design in greater detail, expanding on the overview given in chapter 1.

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the research results, which includes data processing and evaluation.

Chapter 5 highlights the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of the study.

1.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter sets out to supply the reader with a broad orientation to the study. The parameters of the investigation were defined in terms of the context of the study and the gradual clarification of the problem. Overall goals and aims were set, based on this background and research questions to guide the study were formulated. Basic concepts that form part of the study were explained, and the researcher's position was clearly stated. Finally the research methodology to support those paradigmatic perspectives was explicated. Chapter 2 reports on the literature that was reviewed.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a literature study on teaching excellence awards, teaching quality criteria and process management. It begins with a study of the nature of teaching excellence awards worldwide. Elements of the awards process in higher education institutions and organisations internationally will be highlighted. The chapter then proceeds with a study of the current demands for teaching excellence, in general and, in particular, for a dedicated open and distance learning higher education institution, such as Unisa. The chapter concludes with a study on current process management issues, with the aim of identifying a model and principles that could be used to evaluate the 2005 Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process, which is the focus of this investigation.

2.2 EXCELLENCE IN TUITION AWARDS

2.2.1 An overview of a number of existing teaching excellence awards

Scott (2004:12) states that a condition for developing educational expertise amongst South African academics is

... ensuring that expertise in teaching, i.e. in all aspects of the educational process, is genuinely recognised and valued by the institution as essential to the 'core business' of higher education and the success of the institution". This involves recognition of the 'scholarship of teaching and learning' as well of expertise in practice, and would be manifested in concrete ways such as criteria for selection, promotion and scholarly awards at all levels as well as in the overall institutional culture.

Awarding excellent teaching in higher education institutions occurs on a global scale. Boughey (2004:6) links the issues of quality and efficiency (both globally and locally), and the shift towards "corporate managerialism" in higher education, with the pressure put on academics to comply with quality assurance demands in teaching and course design. This becomes evident when one searches the web sites of universities and organisations dealing with higher education. My investigation resulted in the discovery of

teaching excellence awards in the following nine institutions for higher learning (see web site addresses in reference list under the name of the institution or organisation):

- University of Melbourne, Australia
- University of Sydney, Australia
- Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
- University of Toronto (Faculty of Medicine), Canada
- University of Windsor, Ontario, Canada
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States of America
- University of Washington, Tacoma, United States of America
- The Kentucky Academy of Family Physicians, United States of America
- Kennesaw State University, Georgia, United States of America.

Non-university institutions that also offer teaching excellence awards include:

- United States Department of Agriculture
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority
- NEITA Foundation, Australia.

A discussion of the main elements involved in these awards will be highlighted and the relevant processes will be mentioned.

2.2.2 Aim of the awards

Teaching excellence awards have a specific aim in mind and from the literature reviewed it is clear that purpose statements mostly contain issues such as honouring, recognising, promoting, rewarding and encouraging outstanding teaching and educational programmes. Other finer nuances include promoting good practice and enhancing career development of university teachers. Teaching is explained by the University of Sydney as including all activities that contribute to coursework and students' learning experiences.

2.2.3 Names and categories of teaching excellence awards

Awards for excellence in teaching clearly state in their titles what the focus (or origin) of these awards is, namely awarding excellent teaching practices. Examples of such awards include the following, *Alumni Award for Distinguished Contributions to University Teaching* (University of Windsor), the *Vice-Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Teaching* (University of Sydney), the *National Awards Program for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences* (United States Department of Agriculture), *WT Aikins Faculty Teaching Awards: Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching* (University of Toronto), *Distinguished Teaching Award* (University of Washington, Tacoma) and the *Exemplary Teaching Award* (The Kentucky Academy of Family Physicians), to name a few.

Teaching excellence awards also vary according to different categories. The University of Melbourne issues four awards annually in the category of *Awards for Excellence in Teaching and Supervision* (three awards for teaching excellence and one for distinguished supervision). The University of Sydney's *Vice-Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Teaching* is one of three in the category *Vice-Chancellor's University Awards*. The other two awards in this category are for excellence in research higher degree supervision, and for support of the student experience. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill offers teaching excellence awards in six categories, of which two are the *Board of Governors' Award for Excellence in Teaching* and the *Distinguished Teaching Awards for Post-Baccalaureate Instruction*. A last example is that of the University of Toronto, which awards teaching excellence in four categories, namely for individual teaching performance (large groups and small groups), development and use of innovative instructional methods, and course development and coordination.

2.2.4 Eligibility for participation

In general, full-time staff members with at least two years of teaching experience are eligible for these awards. The University of Windsor restricts eligibility to faculty members with a minimum of six consecutive years of teaching at this university, while the New Zealand Qualifications Authority restricts participation to those lecturers who have a minimum of six years of teaching experience in mainly New Zealand tertiary education institutions. The University of Washington has the least rigid restrictions and opens their *Distinguished Teaching Award* up to full-time tenured or tenure-track lecturers, senior

lecturers or principal lecturers with a minimum of one year teaching experience at the University.

2.2.5 Procedures for participation

Participation in most of these mentioned awards is subject to being nominated by either students, alumni, peers or a supervisor (or a combination of these). It seems from the literature reviewed that nomination of a candidate constitutes an important, and often complicated aspect of the awards process. In the case of Victoria University of Wellington a nomination must have the support of the Head of School. A *pro forma* Nomination Form should accompany the candidate's submission and therefore the form is available on the awards web site.

The actual submission for the awards is mostly in the form of a portfolio or a portfolio-like document. This portfolio should contain a document in which the candidate addresses each of the assessment criteria separately, a *curriculum vitae*, copies of learning material and other supporting documentation. The Kentucky Academy of Family Physicians requires the submission to be accompanied by five letters of recommendation. The University of Windsor requires submissions to be accompanied by the support of both current and previous staff members and at least one academic from another university. The University of Melbourne's guidelines state that applicants need to include their results of the Quality Teaching Survey of the previous two years (that is, for each subject taught). At the University of Sydney the Institute for Teaching and Learning provides information sessions to support staff in complying with all the regulations that form part of their *Vice-Chancellor's University Awards*. The selection or evaluation process is also spelled out in the majority of cases. Committees are formed to manage the evaluation process and to reach a final decision.

2.2.6 Assessment criteria

All the universities and organisations mentioned so far (with the exception of the NEiTA Foundation) explicitly highlight their assessment criteria. Unfortunately space does not allow me to discuss all the criteria in detail. However, a summary of the criteria will be attempted.

The following categories of criteria are therefore relevant to this discussion:

- Presentation and communication skills (motivating and inspiring students to learn actively).
- Materials and curriculum development activities (course design and programme development).
- Assessment practices (fostering independent learning).
- Support and development of students (making provision for individualised learning through mentoring and supervision).
- Scholarly activities that enhance teaching and learning.
- Philosophy of teaching and teaching methodology.
- Subject mastery.
- Community involvement (integrating authentic experiences into teaching and learning).

2.2.7 Types of awards

The awards and/or prizes vary, but the majority of these awards have a monetary reward attached to them. Since we are looking at awards from different countries they have to be seen in terms of their own currency value as indicated below. It is interesting to take note of a couple of amounts attached to some of these awards. The University of Windsor (Canada) offers \$1500 per award, while the University of Melbourne (Australia) offers a \$25 000 grant to be used to support any project related to academic work in teaching and research. A trophy accompanies this grant. The University of Sydney (also in Australia) awards winners with \$10 000 and a Certificate of Outstanding Teaching. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority awards \$20 000 to each of nine winners in their category of *New Zealand Government Annual Awards for Outstanding Tertiary Teachers*. The overall winner of these awards receives the Prime Minister's Awards valued at \$30 000. The prize money should be spent on activities that enhance a winner's teaching career and should therefore be applied to promote best teaching practices. The Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto, does not seem to give a monetary reward. However, winners' names are inscribed on a plaque in the foyer of the Medical Science Building. Another example of a monetary reward is that of the University of Washington, Tacoma (USA) which offers winners, together with a plaque, an amount of \$5 000. Kennesaw State University's (Georgia, USA) website mentions a "substantial cash award" but does not indicate what the amount is.

Prize money, trophies and plaques are usually presented to winners during a special ceremony, whether at a graduation ceremony (for example, the University of Windsor, the University of Sydney and the University of Toronto), or during another ceremony such as an annual meeting (for example the Annual Meeting and Scientific Session of The Kentucky Academy for Family Physicians) or the annual opening for university staff (for example at the Kennesaw State University).

2.2.8 Summary

Although this discussion was about a very small sample of existing teaching excellence awards, it is believed to contain the most important elements of such awards, namely the aim of the awards, names and categories, aspects of eligibility, procedures to follow in order to participate, criteria and the different types of prizes or rewards. The next part of the literature review will focus on the current demand for teaching excellence in higher education, in general, and open and distance learning, in particular.

2.3 CURRENT DEMANDS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

The idea of rewarding excellence in teaching is directly related to the general theme of teaching evaluation. Therefore, my first reaction was to view some of the literature on teaching evaluation. A bibliographical search was done with key words being “teaching evaluation”, “teaching awards” and “teacher evaluation”. A subsequent literature search was done with key words being “models of teaching awards”, “teaching award processes”. The following is a summary of the result of this literary search.

2.3.1 Teaching evaluation is a worldwide phenomenon

Skelton (2004:452) asserts that teaching excellence in higher education is inescapably connected to broader social and technological changes (see Romainville 1999). Because of these changes the role and status of teaching are currently being re-examined and re-assessed. Webbstock (1999) highlights some factors that contribute to the importance of teaching in our time, which are also relevant to the South African context:

- Student populations are globally (and in South Africa since 1994) racially and culturally diverse; a reality lecturers need to cope with.

- Curriculum changes are necessary to make learning material more relevant in a new socio-political setting (the new merged Unisa is currently undergoing huge re-curriculation efforts).
- There are current paradigm shifts regarding teaching and learning (Unisa has only recently progressed from distance education institution to an open and distance learning provider).
- Lecturers feel the effect of information and communication technology on their traditional views of teaching and learning (the emphasis on ICTs in Unisa's 2015 vision and mission has been mentioned).
- There is a new relationship between tertiary education and the world of work (skills development has become a national imperative in South Africa).
- New types of learning require that academics develop their teaching skills (the Unisa 2015 *Strategic Plan* emphasises continuous professional development for academics).

This situation has led to an avalanche of teaching evaluation initiatives across the globe. Underwood (2000) indicates that, since 1992, the British higher education sector has been overburdened with evaluations. Evaluations of universities, in the form of audits, have also become a reality in South Africa (see the CHE draft document on *Improving Teaching & Learning Resource*, 2003). Singh, executive director of the HEQC, stated in 2004 during an HEQC seminar on *Improving teaching and learning in higher education in the United Kingdom and South Africa*, that "... one of the key priorities has been identified as teaching and learning ... the need to focus on aspects of teaching and learning to identify and generate best practice in student assessment, moderation, etc., was identified" (CHE 2004). A rigorous and systematic *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process at Unisa may therefore serve as guiding factor in preparing academics for university audit and accreditation exercises.

2.3.2 Resistance in HEIs to evaluation of teaching

Despite this new emphasis on teaching quality, the perception still prevails in many higher education institutions (HEIs) that teaching is inferior to research (Webbstock 1999, 158, also Pratt 1997, Tang 1997). Part of the explanation for this is the fact that it is difficult to agree on and define "good teaching practice". It is further considered problematic to establish and collate evidence thereof. There have, furthermore, traditionally been very few incentives for academic teaching staff's pursuits for

excellence in teaching. Teaching has for too long, according to Elton (as quoted by Webbstock 1999), been seen as merely part of the normal duty of all academic staff, while research is seen as the core of the academic endeavour. Add to this the argument of academic freedom and autonomy and one begins to have an idea why there still is resistance against a rigorous evaluation of teaching in higher education (see also Chan 2001). Singh (2004:2) highlights the fact that due to HEQC audits a number of HEIs who consider themselves to be research institutions are planning and strategising to promote teaching and learning in a more cohesive fashion. The main argument by those who initiated the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* was that teaching should get the same treatment as research in terms of award and recognition.

2.3.3 Teaching evaluation in face-to-face modes of delivery

A wide number of instruments, designed to be used by students to evaluate the teaching of lecturers, are currently used in face-to-face learning institutions. Two of the instruments that have been widely used in Western countries (see the research by Husbands & Fosh 1993) include *The Students' Evaluation of Education Quality* and the *Endeavour Questionnaire*. Efforts have been made to investigate their usefulness in oriental countries, such as China (see Marsh & Roche 1992; Watkins 1994). A huge debate raged during the 1990s regarding the fairness, reliability and validity of student ratings (see Kwan 1999; Shevlin, Banyard, Davies & Griffiths 2000). Peer observation is another means of evaluating the quality of teaching in higher education institutions (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond 2004).

These are obviously evaluation methods for face-to-face teaching environments and are not necessarily generalisable for a distance education environment such as Unisa. Yet, selecting appropriate evaluation instruments is an important element of the evaluation process that needs to be considered for use in our environment.

2.3.4 The drive towards formulating criteria, standards and indicators

It has already been mentioned that quality in teaching is difficult to measure and to quantify. Therefore, teaching is a phenomenon that is difficult to acknowledge and to evaluate. Romainville (1999:418) suggests a way out of this dilemma by laying down criteria of quality in higher education. Four categories of criteria are suggested:

- Numerical indicators and results (e.g. graduation rate, drop-out rate).

- Evaluation by students.
- Evaluation by experts outside the institution.
- Indicators based on quality of learning (e.g. increased independence and autonomy of learners, lifelong learning ability, use of prior experience of learners as learning resource, active and co-operative learning, etc).

Tang (1997) highlights twelve factors as predictors of overall teaching effectiveness, while Ben-Zadok and Carter (1998) modified the criteria of the Teaching Incentive Program of the State University System of Florida, USA, from an emphasis on quantity criteria, to include more quality elements of teaching.

The formulation of criteria for good teaching practice in higher education is not new to South Africa, with bodies such as the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), the National Association for Distance Education and Open –learning in South Africa (NADEOSA), and the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) setting rigorous criteria (see discussion further on). One South African university has already embarked on the road to monitoring and measuring students' developmental processes by using specific criteria and indicators (Bitzer 2005).

Although this study does not deal directly with the issue of formulating evaluation criteria, this plays an important role in the process of teaching evaluation. Negotiating an applicable set of criteria for a specific educational environment is crucial to the process of awarding teaching excellence.

2.3.5 Models for awarding teaching excellence

An attempt will now be made to highlight some of the elements in existing models for awarding excellent teaching as highlighted in the literature, especially as far as they relate directly to this study. The following principles and practices regarding procedural matters can be drawn from these models and will surely inform the overall evaluation of the

2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process at Unisa, which is the focus of this study:

- The teaching evaluation process should accommodate a diversity of instruments, situations and sources. The teaching portfolio has proved to be a suitable

instrument to accomplish this (Webbstock 1999; Panici 1999; Saroyan & Amundsen 2001; Finch, Helms & Etkin 1997). Candidates' submissions for the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* are also in the form of a teaching portfolio. Most of the participants in this study (see chapter 4) felt that a study package (Study Guide and Tutorial Letters) alone does not reflect an endeavour as complex as teaching. Training academics in the art of designing a portfolio of evidence could in future, perhaps, become part of the entire process of awarding excellence in tuition. Designing an array of instruments for teaching evaluation, such as the portfolio, student and peer evaluation, seems to form part of the process of awarding teaching excellence.

- Teaching ought to be assessed using recognised criteria, that is, criteria used within academia in general, and not just that of a single institution (Panici 1999, also Skelton 2004). This practice will cause the process to be more sophisticated, structured and systematic. The 2005 Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* task team therefore opted for more generally used criteria (for example, that of NADEOSA). As mentioned earlier, negotiating and debating evaluation criteria is crucial to the success of the process.
- Evaluation is not done in isolation but needs to be part of a cyclical process that simultaneously covers teaching, research and (community) service – traditionally the three main elements of an academic's "job description" (see Roulet 1994 for an example of this integrated approach at the University of Geneva). Unisa has traditionally awarded excellent research in isolation. This was, as mentioned earlier, the most important factor in advocating for the tuition awards. The relationship between research and teaching brings an interesting perspective to the debate, one that will not, however, be pursued here. Perhaps the two current Unisa processes (awarding research and awarding teaching) ought to be combined (together with academic citizenship or community service) to award overall excellence.
- Effective teaching (the object of evaluation and reward) should be understood within a sound theoretical framework. Pratt (1997) suggests a framework that goes beyond focusing on the teacher's actions alone (what Darling-Hammond, 1998, refers to as the 'input approach'), but also includes teacher intentions and beliefs. Focusing only on teaching actions in teacher evaluation may result in technical rather than substantive approaches to teaching evaluation. Unfortunately, too many academics in distance education still emphasise the discipline content (writing study material) part of their teaching, with little regard to

a philosophical underpinning of their actions (intentions and beliefs). It was precisely this issue that motivated the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* task team to suggest that not only study material be submitted for the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards*, but a portfolio of evidence that contains substantive evidence of good teaching practices, such as one's personal education philosophy.

2.3.6 Existing criteria, standards and indicators for good teaching practice

A discussion of existing criteria, standards and indicators for good teaching highlights both the level of excellence in teaching that this study refers to and the need for awards for excellent teaching in a South African context. Since this study does not particularly deal with criteria for excellence in tuition only a sample of criteria will be taken from each of the following:

- the HEQC criteria
- the NADEOSA criteria
- the DETC standards

It would be noted that all three of these sets of criteria and standards are relevant for open and distance teaching and learning environments. This makes them particularly relevant to this study, since Unisa, which is the case in point, constitutes such an environment. The last set of standards (that of the DETC) has been selected to illustrate international (non-South African) criteria for excellence in tuition.

2.3.6.1 South African Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC): criteria for accreditation of programmes

The responsibility for quality assurance in higher education in South Africa is assigned to the Council on Higher Education (CHE) by the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997. This responsibility is discharged through its permanent sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) (HEQC 2005:1). In order to execute its functions, namely quality promotion, institutional audit and programme accreditation, the HEQC has formulated quality-related criteria that serve as evaluative tools.

These criteria are public domain and enable institutions to analyse and reflect on their specific quality regime. It seems therefore important that these criteria are reflected in any instrument used by an institution, such as Unisa, to award its excellent teachers.

The HEQC's *Criteria for Accreditation of Programmes offered through Distance Education* (2005) attempts to map the “extensively discussed criteria developed by the National Association for Distance Education and Open-learning of South Africa (NADEOSA)” (HEQC 2005:4) onto the existing CHE general programme criteria. Two of these criteria, namely Criterion 5 and Criterion 6, specifically address the issue of teaching and learning and is therefore relevant to our discussion.

Criterion 5 reads as follows:

The institution gives recognition to the importance of the promotion of student learning. The teaching and learning strategy is appropriate for the institutional type ..., mode(s) of delivery and student composition, contains mechanisms to ensure the appropriateness of teaching and learning methods, and makes provision for staff to upgrade their teaching methods. The strategy sets targets, plans for implementation, as well as mechanisms to monitor progress, evaluate impact and effect improvement.

(HEQC 2005:17)

This criterion seems to focus on the institutional level of quality and one may find it difficult to translate this criterion into individual teaching practices. However, on page 18 of the mentioned document, Criterion Five is translated in terms of teaching and learning in distance education. This criterion translates into the fact that “the major teacher is the course material (the material mediated through various technologies) rather than the speaking teacher” (HEQC 2005:18), as in the case of face to face environments. Good teaching and learning practices in ODL, therefore focuses on the development of learning materials and the development of increasingly sophisticated levels of independent study based on these materials.

For the purpose of this study it is therefore important to, in the process of awarding excellence in tuition, take note of the quality of the learning material and the learning experience that it facilitates. This is closely related to the next criterion, Criterion Six, which reads as follows:

The different modes of delivery of the programme have appropriate policies and procedures for internal assessment; internal and external moderation; monitoring of student progress; explicitness, validity and reliability of assessment practices; recording of assessment results; setting of disputes; the rigour and security of the assessment system; RPL; and for the development of staff competence in assessment. Assessment is an essential feature of the teaching and learning process, is properly managed, and meets the requirements of accreditation bodies and employers.

(HEQC 2005:18)

Once more, one needs to translate this criterion into quantifiable elements to see the relevance thereof for individual teaching practices. According to the HEQC report (2005) critical issues for distance education includes, two aspects that lecturers need to take cognisance of, namely formative assessment and feedback on assessment. Excellent teaching therefore incorporates “sufficient formative assessment to ensure that the student is given a reasonable chance of success and to identify and address problem areas before completion of any final summative assessment for the programme” (HEQC 2005:19).

The aim of this brief discussion was to indicate the extremely high quality level the HEQC sets for teaching practices.

2.3.6.2 *National Association for Distance Education and Open-learning of South Africa (NADEOSA): quality criteria*

Welch and Glennie (nd: 10-17) give a historical overview of the drive towards quality in distance education in South Africa, with the emphasis on the formulation of quality criteria and standards. One outcome of this process was the NADEOSA Quality Criteria for Distance Education in South Africa (see Welch & Reed nd: 18-57). These criteria, Welch and Glennie conclude (nd: 13) “are a description of what constitutes quality as understood by the distance education community in South Africa at this point in our history”.

The criteria for the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* for 2005 relied heavily on the NADEOSA Quality Criteria, due to its direct relevance to open and distance learning environments. Again, two of these criteria may serve to highlight the high quality of

teaching expected of lecturers in a higher education institution such as Unisa, namely criteria four and five.

Criterion 4 deals specifically with course design and read as follows:

The course curriculum is well-researched, with aims and learning outcomes appropriate to the level of study; content, teaching and learning and assessment methods facilitate the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes; there is an identified process of development and evaluation of courses.

(Welch & Reed nd: 26)

This criterion is supplemented by a whole range of elements dealing with three categories, namely course planning, course curriculum and quality assurance. In terms of course planning courses need to, for instance, be designed with national needs in mind, planned technologies and media need to complement the learning outcomes and course materials need to reflect the guidelines in the institution's language policy.

Criterion 6 is closely related to the previous one and reads as follows:

The content, assessment, and learning approaches in the course materials support the aims and learning outcomes; the materials are accessibly presented; they teach in a coherent way that engages the learners; there is an identified process of development and evaluation of course materials.

(Welch & Reed nd: 28)

Elements of this criterion include materials development planning, quality course materials and quality assurance. Under Quality Course Materials, a number of more specific criteria are set for print-based as well as web-based/online courses. Since the submissions for the 2005 Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* were all print-based, a few examples from these specific criteria for print-based learning material will be highlighted. The content and teaching approach followed in these materials need to support students in achieving the learning outcomes. Students' language level and context need to be taken into consideration when developing these materials.

Students need to be engaged intellectually and practically and teaching approaches should cater for individual needs. The learning materials need to be of a high technical quality which facilitates student use.

These are but some of the quality elements associated with these two criteria. It becomes clear from this brief example from the NADEOSA Quality Criteria what the level of quality is for learning provision in open and distance education.

2.3.6.3 *Distance Education and Training Council (DETC): standards for accreditation*

A third set of criteria to be highlighted as part of this literature review is that of the American Distance Education and Training Council (DETC) which was founded in 1926. The purpose of this council is “to foster and preserve high quality, educationally sound and widely accepted distance education and independent learning institutions” (Distance Education and Training Council Accreditation Handbook 2005:7). Unisa is currently accredited to the DETC and therefore their standards are relevant to this institution and therefore to this study. Through its accreditation standards, the Accreditation Commission measures the educational quality, financial responsibility, administrative competency and general worthiness of an institution for accreditation.

The standard that is relevant to this study is standard two which reads as follows:

The institution has clearly stated and reasonably attainable educational program objectives and offers educationally sound and up-to-date curricula that are supported by quality instructional materials.
(Distance Education and Training Council Accreditation Handbook 2005:41)

A number of issues are discussed under this standard of which the following could be highlighted:

- a clear description of programme objectives (which include the benefits for students, character and nature of the instruction and available services, amongst others)

- appropriate programme objectives that can be attained through a variety of methods of distance study (these objectives include skills, job-related training, application of knowledge and skills and the development of habits and attitudes)
- a comprehensive and up-to-date (current knowledge and practice) curriculum to achieve stated objectives, developed by qualified staff in distance study techniques and principles of learning
- comprehensive and current instructional materials (that reflect current knowledge and practice and that are regularly revised)
- a variety of assessment techniques that adequately assess learning outcomes
- written materials are well reproduced and attractive in layout and format and suit the reading competence of students in the programme
- clear instructions on how to approach the material and to learn effectively and efficiently
- appropriate learning resources and media

The standard that the DETC sets for quality distance teaching is evident from this brief description.

2.3.7 Summary

This brief literature overview of criteria and standards for excellence in ODL was meant to illustrate the existing knowledge regarding quality in higher distance teaching. It became evident from the interviews conducted for this study that the assessment criteria that were set for the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* (which largely reflect the standards or level of quality set out by these three examples) were not equally appreciated throughout the University. The higher education sector in South Africa still needs to come to grips with the phenomenon of teaching evaluation (see views on accountability in Scott 2004:12). The *Excellence in Tuition Awards* at Unisa is, however, a step in the right direction. Its aim is to have clear processes in place to award excellent teaching based on, amongst other things, well-founded quality criteria. The next theme will highlight some of the principles involved in ensuring an effective process or processes for awarding excellence in tuition in an organisation such as a higher education learning institution.

2.4 CURRENT VIEWS ON PROCESS MANAGEMENT

Process management forms part of a much larger field, namely business process management. Ongaro (2004:81) includes the role of business in his definition of process management as follows: "Process management is a managerial approach characterised by the focus on business processes as the criterion used by top management ... for the organisational design and the assignment of managerial responsibilities." Business process management, therefore, deals with customer satisfaction, quality issues, workflow and managing change in the business environment. Monographs (such as that of Reijers 2003 and Van der Aalst, Desel & Oberweis 2000) and conference proceedings edited by authors such as Van der Aalst, Ter Hofstede and Weske (2003), Desel, Pernici and Weske (2004) and Van der Aalst, Benatallah, Casati and Curbera (2005) highlight the extreme level of complexity and vastness of this field of research. It is, however, not the aim of this literature study to go into detail regarding workflows and other business processes, but to create an awareness of the basic principles of process management as background to the evaluation of the 2005 Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards*.

2.4.1 What is process management?

Wilson (2004:261) defines process as "a series of events that leads to the delivery of a predetermined output", while Gruhn, Köhler and Klawes (2005:2) follow Davenport's definition (1993) of business process, namely "a specific ordering of work activities across time and place, with a beginning, an end, and clearly identified inputs and outputs: a structure for action". A business process can be decomposed into different levels to form sub-processes and if a sub-process is not decomposable it is called an activity. Thus, a business process, according to these last authors, can be understood as an abstract description of workflows in a company. Reijers (2003:4) reminds us of the definition of business process formulated by Hammer and Champy in 1993 that still informs the literature in this field, namely "a collection of activities that takes one or more kinds of input and creates an output that is of value to the customer".

Bawden and Zuber-Skerritt (2002:132) highlight the fact that a new management style is beginning to pervade business and higher education alike; one that recognises "that a principal issue is the process that delivers an outcome". This new style of management recognises the importance of processes in producing a product, while being inextricably linked to the determining of that product. One of the reasons for this shift is, according to Bawden and Zuber-Skerritt (2002), the renewed understanding that people matter in

determining the performance of enterprises and economies. Kim and Ramkaran (2004:27-28) concur with this view, stating that the traditional division of labour model designed during the nineteenth century and which focuses on narrow task-oriented jobs, is no longer sufficient for companies entering the twenty-first century (see Reijers 2003:1-3). Current models rather emphasise a multi-dimensional workplace where workers are expected to think, take responsibility and act.

Balzarova, Bamber, McCambridge and Sharp (2004:387) refer to “a fundamental change from a functionally orientated organisation to a process oriented system”. A “functionally orientated organisation” is one in which managers view the organisation as a mixed collection of functions managed by a hierarchical system of heads of departments. This leads to particular departments working in isolation, where the transfer of knowledge is discouraged and where a teamwork culture is diminished. An organisation as a process oriented system, on the other hand, emphasises a series of interrelated activities that cross functional boundaries with individual inputs and outputs (Balzarova *et al* 2004:389). This view correlates with Wilson’s definition of “process” mentioned earlier, where the focus is on developing an end product as defined by the sum of the developmental capability of the process. This new focus is part and parcel of the changing environments that organisations find themselves in and is a move away from an inflexible attitude of not wanting to adapt to changing circumstances.

Key concepts in process management are therefore innovation, creativity, imagination and processes that will eventually benefit an entire organisation. What is at stake here is a facilitative structure which advocates group equity, group ownership of the product and shared ownership of the process by the facilitator and the group. Process management therefore focuses on the participants in the process and constitutes more “a state of mind than a series of concrete, observable events” (Bawden & Zuber-Skerritt 2002:134). It is therefore more about relationships than tasks. Bawden and Zuber-Skerritt also see a direct relationship between process management and experiential learning in that the process entails learning from their own engagement with issues, that is “experimenting, being allowed to make mistakes, reflecting upon experiences, conceptualising the results of effects of the experience, distilling its lessons and repeating the cycle by trying newly gained knowledge in different situations” (Bawden & Zuber-Skerritt 2002:135).

Contexts of uncertainty, such as that of higher education currently, are ideal environments for process management to take place. “Uncertain environments” is the first type of situation these last authors identify, in which process management can be appropriately used. A second situation for appropriating process management is where

executive managers are willing to distribute authority to others in the organisation. It therefore suggests effective group processes rather than individual decision making and top-down control.

The above literature review of the current demands on teaching and learning in higher education (see section 2.3) constitutes a convincing example of a situation of uncertainty that requires empowerment rather than control, group consensus rather than individual decision making and group responsibility and collaboration rather than top-down control. Only in an atmosphere of flexibility, freedom of action and greater responsibility can academics participate more actively in designing, implementing and reviewing their work (Bawden & Zuber-Skerritt 2002:137). Process management therefore facilitates democratic and humanitarian principles that help to equalise relationships in the workplace. Process management further facilitates trust between people rather than expecting them to follow passively and uncritically.

2.4.2 Some basic principles of process management

Kent (2005:16) discusses process management in terms of the technological needs of an organisation and highlights two very important aspects, namely:

- It is a philosophy which emphasises a cultural shift within a company and which encourages members to share of information.
- It provides a holistic view of the enterprise because it acknowledges that business processes are intrinsically linked; this undermines the narrow departmental approach.

Process management therefore, according to Kent, “promises to help manage organizational change, keep businesses agile, and become a strong foundation for ongoing improvement” . This is closely linked to Bawden and Zuber-Skerritt’s linking of process management with experiential (and action) learning.

Ramesh, Jain, Nissen and Xu (2005) add another important underlying principle of process management to the debate, namely that knowledge of the organisational context is essential for business processes. It has been mentioned already that changing environments add to the complexity and dynamics of organisations. Therefore, agility or flexibility in organisations (the ability to adapt to changing circumstances) is essential in maintaining competitive advantage. Process participants therefore need to have access

to information on how various processes are mapped to the strategic goals and business context (Ramesh et al 2005:223; this point also features in the Balzarova et al model discussed further on).

Ongaro (2004:81) describes process management as “a managerial approach characterised by the focus on business processes as the criterion used by top management ... for the organisational design and the assignment of managerial responsibilities”. A number of features emanate from this description and are relevant to this study (Ongaro 2004:84-87):

- The diffusion of an organisational culture oriented to processes – a process culture is achieved if processes are perceived by staff as the place where organisational resources are activated and employed. This is closely related to the emphasis on the “human factor”, as highlighted by Bawden and Zuber-Skerritt, referred to above.
- The identification of a process owner, who is responsible for process performances, has authority on process aims and resources, oversees the organisation of labour in the process and who acts as leader of the process team. Ongaro (2004:96) highlights a number of significant roles that the process owner should fulfil, amongst others, (a) a holistic, cross-cutting view of the organisation, (b) a strong identification with the customer-orientation credo (see further on) and (c) the capability of managing groups and leading teams.
- The activation of supplier-customer chains, which means that organisational units “down stream” in the workflow have to be considered as customers, while those “up stream” act as if they were suppliers. All intermediate organisational units therefore need to be included in the supplier-customer relationship. Ongaro (2004:100) emphasises the fact that an enhanced customer-orientation can produce organisational results, such as the reduction of throughput times or an increased output quality.
- The delegation of team work, which gives personnel, who are still dependent in functional terms on an organisational unit, the responsibility to work towards process targets. Process teams could even be established to manage the interconnections of the different phases of the process.

Although Kim and Ramkaran (2004) discuss process management in terms of the electronic business environment, a number of pertinent principles emerge from their

discussion (Kim & Ramkaran 2004:34-40). Those relevant to this study are mentioned briefly:

- Organise process around results and outcomes, not tasks.
- Let those workers who use the output of the process perform the process (workers make decisions).
- Subsume information-processing work into the real work that produces the information (tasks should overlap rather than be completed before another starts).
- Link parallel activities instead of integrating their results (coordinate activities rather than reconcile results).
- Place the decision point where the work is performed and build control into the process (this reduces top-down checks and controls).
- Capture information once and at the source (empower people to perform the work where it makes most sense).
- Processes have multiple versions (have flexible business rules and support multiple interfaces).
- A case (or process) manager provides a single (human) point of contact.

The advantages of process management for an organisation seem obvious from this discussion and may include the following, according to Ongaro (2004:101-103):

- It contributes to the implementation of reforms (see Bawden and Zuber-Skerritt's focus on changing environments).
- It enhances accountability.
- It enhances transparency.
- It identifies responsibilities.
- It engages stakeholders.
- It enhances interconnectedness.

2.4.3 A model on how to implement process management

Balzarova et al (2004) explore the implementation of a process-based management system within a service organisation. They emphasise the relationship between the interdependent elements of an organisation as one of the pillars of Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy (Balzarova *et al* 2004:389). The TQM perspective

towards process-based implementation therefore takes the lessons from the failures during implementation and provides the basis for future activities of the organisation. Measurements of the implementation process involves, according to these authors (Balzarova et al 2004:391), the setting of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the implementation process which steers the implementation process. Balzarova et al (2004:391) highlight the work of Zairi (1996) on the effect of managing performance and support the conclusion that management performance is important for the following reasons:

- It enhances management that is steered by facts.
- It determines what to pay attention to and where to improve.
- It provides a “scoreboard” for people to monitor their performance levels.
- It gives an indication of costing to poor quality.
- It shows a standard for establishing comparisons.
- It complies with objectives.

Balzarova et al (2004:391), mention three obstacles to implementation of organisational initiatives, namely:

- lack of management support and understanding
- lack of sufficient training
- failure to allow sufficient time for evolution of the process of change.

Balzarova et al (2004:392-394) suggest a process-based management implementation model that is basically built on a set of seven obstacles and difficulties to a successful implementation of process-based management systems. Balzarova et al (2004:395) conclude, after applying this model to a case study, that “it is suggested that central to the successful implementation of process-based management is the top management and key stakeholders’ support of the seven factors”.

A list of these seven obstacles will be given (see Figure 1), and each of them will then be discussed briefly. They are:

- failure to allow sufficient time for evolution
- lack of communication and awareness
- process mapping, its integration and understanding

- measuring performance
- resistance to change
- teamwork and team development
- training and learning by doing.

Failure to allow sufficient time for evolution involves, for instance an arbitrary completion date for the transfer from a functional management system to a process-based management system. It takes a significant amount of time to establish a new way of dealing with responsibilities and tasks. Assembling and motivating a critical mass of devoted key stakeholders to effect change in the organisation seems to be a timely exercise.

Lack of communication and awareness undermines motivation, employees' full involvement and the understanding of roles and responsibilities. Successful communication and awareness of the needs of a process-based management system is best facilitated through teams and teamwork (see further on). The building of cross-functional rapport is crucial to successful business process management.

Process mapping, its integration and understanding implies the understanding of clear workflow throughout the company. Processes need to be visualised prior to improvement.

Measuring performance takes the mission statement of the organisation seriously as well as those key processes of an organisation that are able to deliver the mission and goals. The role of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) is to measure, analyse and re-evaluate results of the performance data.

Resistance to change occurs when change is imposed on people. In this context "change" implies the successful transition from a functional to a process management style of business management. It is therefore paramount to establish a shared purpose (vision) with all stakeholders, which may reduce resistance to the initiative. Coupled with this is the definition of roles and responsibilities at each stage of the change initiative.

Teamwork and team development is necessary for establishing and maintaining a process-based system for total quality management. Establishing the personal needs of the team is crucial for the success of any team.

Training and learning by doing are directly linked to those factors that enable the successful implementation of process-based management systems. Teams need to know what other teams in the organisation are doing. Learning by doing is one approach to training and implies dialogue on how to get the job done, listening to each other and trying out tools of process improvement.

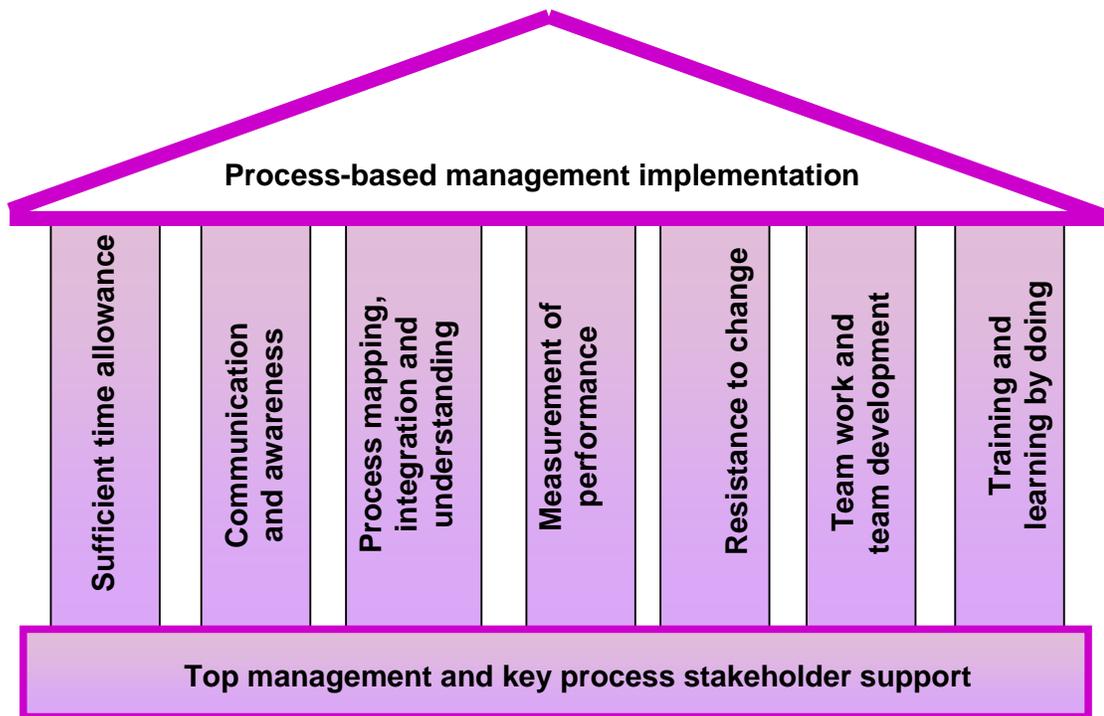


Figure 1: Process-based management implementation model (Balzarova et al 2004:396)

These key factors appear to be soft issues or human factors. This echoes the emphasis by Bawden and Zuber-Skerritt (2002) on people-orientated organisations. However, the Balzarova et al (2004) case study does show that these soft issues are significant and present within the implementation of process-based management. This model may have far-reaching implications for other service organisations, such as higher education institutions, and could be used as a framework or self-assessment model for these organisations.

2.4.4 Summary

A brief literature overview was presented on issues pertaining to process management in which it became increasingly clear that organisations that experience change need new management styles. Process-based management offers itself as useful in a variety of contexts, especially that of the service industry, of which higher education is part and parcel. A model was presented that could be used in this study as self-assessment tool or framework to evaluate the process of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* at Unisa. The final chapter to this study will explore this point further.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a literature study on teaching excellence awards, teaching quality criteria and process management. A brief overview of the nature of teaching excellence awards worldwide was given which highlighted elements of the awards process in higher education institutions and organisations internationally. The chapter proceeded with a study of the current demands for teaching excellence (both locally and internationally) by focussing on criteria and standards for open and distance learning higher education institutions, such as Unisa. The chapter concluded with a study of basic process management issues and identified a model that could be used to evaluate the 2005 Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process, which is the focus of this investigation.

The following chapter supplies the reader with a detailed discussion of the research methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

It was indicated in chapter 1 (section 1.8) that the research strategy and methodology will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter. This chapter therefore includes the philosophical paradigm that underlies the research and the research methods entertained in this study, namely methods of acquiring, analysing and reporting data.

3.2 AIM OF THE STUDY

Before a detailed discussion of the research design can follow, it is appropriate to reiterate the aim of the study as put forward in chapter one. The aim of this study is, firstly, to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process, as experienced by a sample of those who were closely involved in the previously mentioned phases of the process. Secondly, the study aims to identify ways to improve the process for future Awards processes.

It is important to state clearly that the first aim mentioned above will be the main aim of the study. The entire research design will therefore be focused on achieving this aim. The second aim will flow from the first and feature significantly in the concluding chapter on recommendations and conclusions (Chapter 5).

3.3 RESEARCH STRATEGY

This study utilises a *qualitative research strategy*, which differs significantly from a quantitative research strategy. Banister, Burman, Parker, Maye and Tindall (1994:2) define qualitative research simply as “the interpretative study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made”. Potter (1996:13) is of the opinion that the qualitative approach is a perspective on research where the researcher examines a phenomenon, develops insight into it and reports these insights to others. Qualitative research therefore contains a significant element of capturing the sense that lies within actions and experiences. According to Banister et al (1994), qualitative research also attempts to explore, elaborate and systematise the significance of an identified phenomenon.

According to Marlow (2005:164) qualitative research depicts the type of data that is collected and does not necessarily refer to the entire research approach. It will, therefore, be more correct to say that one's research strategy largely follows an inductive, rather than a deductive approach, which is mainly an interpretivist and qualitative type of inquiry. It is however not the aim of this study to fall into the trap of an either-or dichotomy regarding research paradigms. It is also not the aim to generalise the results of this investigation to all processes concerned with awarding excellence in tuition, but to limit it to the Unisa context and experience.

Anastas and MacDonald (1994) speak of qualitative research in terms of a flexible method of research, which, since the natural context of a phenomenon contributes to the meaning of the data, takes the context of the research seriously. It is for this reason that chapter 1 explores the context of the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* rather extensively. Even the observer, according to these authors, forms part of this context (Anastas & MacDonald 1994:291). Therefore, some degree of reflexivity is inherent in the observational context.

It was stated in chapter 1 that this study corresponds to the *case study* strategy of inquiry, which Fouché (in De Vos 2002:275) defines as “an exploration or in-depth analysis of a ‘bounded system’ ... over a period of time”. Since, according to Fouche, a case study can refer to a process bounded by time and/or place, it fits well with this study, which investigates the process of the awarding of excellence in tuition at Unisa over a period of one year. Context is important in the case study inquiry, which makes Anastas and MacDonald's comments on context relevant here. Bassey (in Swann & Pratt 2003:116) describes four criteria for a case study. It should be trustworthy, ethically conducted, convey something significant to someone (e.g. managers, policy makers), and be meaningful and readable to various audiences. It is believed that this study complies with these criteria.

The qualitative approach is in both theory and practice a complex process with no clearly defined recipe or course of action. However, the following elements of the approach may be highlighted, which this study aims to follow as guidelines (Marlow 2005):

- The research process is more fluid and circular.
- The methods of analysis are less structured.

- The primary aim is to look for patterns in the data – noting similarities and differences.
- Data ought to be kept in context (contextual analysis), with constant reference to specific situations, time periods and persons involved in the investigation.
- The tendency is towards inductive thinking – connections and patterns in the data lead to hypotheses and theoretical constructs.

It will become clear from the following section on research methods, that the qualitative researcher who follows a case study line of inquiry has a multitude of data collection methods at his or her disposal. This is obviously aimed at the in-depth analysis and description referred to above.

In summary, this study can be placed within a certain framework, using Potter's three-dimensional space model, as follows (Potter 1996:22):

- Its axiomatic or philosophical position is that of *epistemology*, which is concerned with how human beings construct meaning. For this reason the analysis of the data assumes an interpretive stance.
- Regarding the study's concrete practices it embraces the *case study* approach (with emphasis on interviewing as method to gather data). Other tools that form part of this method include analysing data and reporting research findings.
- Regarding methodology (the strategy that lays out the blueprint for using the tools or methods) this study employs *qualitative methodologies* relevant to the phenomenon under investigation.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODS

3.4.1 Ethical measures

Ethical awareness amongst researchers dealing with humans in clinical, behavioural and social settings has increased over the past couple of decades and all possible measures are employed to ensure that participants are treated humanely (Darlington & Scott 2002: 22f). Monette, Sullivan and De Jong (2005:53-62) discuss a number of ethical issues relevant to social science research, such as informed consent, absence of deception,

privacy, safeguard against physical and mental distress, amongst others. Not all of these, however, apply directly to this study.

One issue, though, namely *confidentiality*, is of significance to this investigation. Confidentiality is, according to Monette et al (2005:57), the act of ensuring that information about or data collected from those who participate in the study are not made public in a way that can be linked to an individual. Marlow (2005:195) emphasises that confidentiality refers to the fact that the researcher knows the identity of the respondents and their associated responses, but ensures that this information is not disclosed. Since the data for this study were collected by means of interviews, it is impossible to ensure anonymity (the lack of identifying a specific response with a specific respondent) (Marlow 2005:195). Research based on the case study method, such as this one, also has difficulty disguising the data so that the setting or participants are completely unrecognisable (Darlington & Scott 2002:29). The challenge therefore is to disseminate the “voices” of the participants in the public domain in such a way that their privacy is protected.

Participants’ names will therefore not be linked to the data in any way that would compromise their personal or professional position at Unisa. Individual participant views will be kept confidential and reporting of the data will focus on the sample group’s responses rather than on that of any individual participant.

Another issue, namely *informed consent*, also comes into play in an investigation such as this one. Marlow (2005:106); and Darlington and Scott (2002:26) describe informed consent as informing potential participants in the research about their role in the investigation, the consequences of their participation in the research and that their permission is required to take part. Monette et al (2005:53) emphasise the fact that potential research participants need to be told about all aspects of the research that might reasonably influence their decision to participate. Potential participants to this study were consequently well informed about the context, purpose and outcome of the study, namely that it investigates the 2005 process of the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* (context), that it aims at determining the strengths and weaknesses of this process together with possible ways to improve the current process (purpose), as well as the fact that it is for the partial fulfilment of a Master’s degree in Education (outcome). Potential participants were notified either by telephone or by electronic mail and were requested to participate in the investigation. The researcher in this case did not make

use of written consent or the use of a consent form, as is advocated by some researchers in the literature (see Monette et al 2005:53).

Only one person declined the request to take part in the investigation. The person felt that due to the rush in which the teaching portfolio had to be submitted and the lack of knowledge about what guidelines to follow, no meaningful comments could be made about any process that was followed regarding the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*.

3.4.2 Measures to ensure trustworthiness

Schram (2003:95) links trustworthiness directly to the integrity of one's inquiry; that is, respect for other researchers, policy makers, practitioners as well as one's participants. Trustworthiness (or the researcher's and others' trust in the account) is further coupled with ethics, standards and correct conduct. Schram discusses considerations of a practical nature of which he mentions three, namely the researcher's presence, the researcher's selectivity in selecting some issues but not others, as well as the researcher's ability to deal with subjectivity.

A researcher's presence in a scientific setting does not necessarily guarantee credibility. This emphasises the fact that the researcher should constantly be aware of the disrupting or contaminating effect that his or her presence may have on the investigation. On the other hand, a researcher's presence may contribute to a heightened sensitivity towards and even enhanced understanding of the subtleties of the situation. Rather than merely hoping for the best the researcher has the responsibility to acknowledge the constraints and possibilities of his or her presence.

I am acutely aware of the fact that I have been involved in the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* since its inception in 2004 as member of both the Senate Tuition Committee and the College of Human Sciences Task Team, tasked to put the principle of such award into practice during 2004 and 2005. I further acted as external evaluator for two submissions, headed the evaluation panels of the submissions from a number of Schools in the College of Human Sciences, was involved in designing the assessment criteria for submissions and evaluation panels, have conducted workshops on teaching portfolios and have informed academic departments and interest groups on issues pertaining to Unisa's *Excellence in Tuition Awards*.

On the consideration of *selective experience*, Schram (2003:98) stresses that the qualitative fieldworker does not simply gather facts or listens to the view of a single

person, but is actively engaged in a process of interpretation and selection. Credibility in this sense boils down to “fitness for purpose”, or choosing what to attend to. This is directly related to Schram’s third consideration of trustworthiness, namely *engaged subjectivity*, that is, the researcher’s ability to make decisions (Schram 2003:99). These decisions are clearly based on the researcher’s personal qualities and attributes, such as emotions or personal sensibility, which influence the research. This engaged subjectivity serves as important filter through which one perceives the topic under investigation. Feelings, personal qualities and emotional responses, therefore, serve as authentic points of departure “for inquiring why you are perceiving and to what effect you are interpreting matters as you are” (Schram 2003:99).

I stated in chapter 1 (section 1.7) what my value position is regarding teaching, namely that of quality and accountability. A career of eighteen years as lecturer at Unisa has made me aware of the fact that there is no substitute for good teaching practice. For this reason I developed a passion for teaching excellence. I even achieved formal tertiary training and qualifications in the field of higher education. The fact that I am currently finalising a Master’s degree in Education further highlights the point. A personal passion for excellence in teaching, therefore, adds value to the trustworthiness and credibility of this study.

These attributes, emotions and interests inform my presence in this investigation, my selection and my subjectivity and serve as filters through which the phenomenon at hand is perceived and interpreted. Patton (as quoted in Marlow 2005:165) suggests replacing the terms “objectivity” and “subjectivity” with “neutrality”, since objectivity is virtually impossible and subjectivity is plagued with negative connotations. Neutrality implies that the researcher is not out to prove a specific point of view or to manipulate the data to serve a preconceived truth. Patton suggests further that the term “empathetic neutrality” be used for the qualitative approach to data collecting and analysis.

3.4.3 Data collection

Two aspects of the research method will be discussed, namely sampling and interviewing.

3.4.3.1 Sampling

The study under consideration utilised the *purposive* or *judgemental sampling* method, which means that the investigator uses his/or her own judgement and prior knowledge to choose people for the sample who best serve the purposes of the study (Monette et al 2005:148). Marlow (2005:144) refers to this approach as *criterion* sampling, which involves picking cases that meet some criteria.

For the sake of this research I chose a group that is information rich regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The aim with this type of sampling is not to represent the distribution of features in totality, but rather to determine what is typical of the object under investigation (Flick, Von Kardorff & Steinke 2000:167).

It was mentioned briefly in chapter one (section 1.8) that the sample for this investigation included individuals who were purposively selected due to their direct involvement in the 2005 process of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* at Unisa. This included individuals who participated in any one of the three phases mentioned earlier, namely the preparation phase, the submission phase and the evaluation phase. The breakdown for each of these phases, in terms of what part of the sample was involved in which phase, is as follows: three individuals of the sample group took part in the *planning phase* and were therefore members of the Senate Tuition Committee Task Team. Six lecturers who submitted their teaching portfolios formed part of the sample and represented the *submission phase*. Three individuals who acted as *internal evaluators* formed the third element of the sample.

These respondents complied with the qualities of informants that the qualitative researcher seeks (Flick et al 2000:169), namely (a) they had available the knowledge and experience that the investigator needed, (b) they were capable of reflection, (c) they were articulate individuals, (d) they had time to be interviewed, and (e) they were willing to take part in the investigation.

The reason for including the abovementioned group of respondents was to guarantee that the case be representative of as many facets of the case as possible. Variation that was achieved by this specific sample included the following (Flick et al 2000:169):

- Different phases of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process were covered (preparation, submission and evaluation phases).
- Interviews took place in a variety of locations, namely the offices of academics all across the Unisa Muckleneuck campus (unfortunately no interviews were held with staff on the Florida campus).
- A wide range of academic positions were represented in the sample, which ranged from vice deans, professors, chairs of schools, heads of academic departments, senior and junior lecturing staff, chairpersons of school and college tuition committees.
- An extended period of time was used for the interviews, namely from February to November 2005.

It should be mentioned that none of the *external evaluators* were included in the sample, because, as outsiders (that is, not being Unisa staff members) they were not directly involved in or familiar with the process connected to the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. It was therefore judged to be of limited significance to the investigation to question them on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the process under investigation. Secondly, internal evaluators who were interviewed clearly commented on issues regarding external evaluators, for example on the ineffectiveness of the process to support evaluation panel chairs in identifying and obtaining suitable external evaluators. Remarks and suggestions regarding the external evaluators will therefore feature in the analysis (see chapter 4).

3.4.3.2 *Interviewing*

Within the ambit of the qualitative research approach, this study made extensive use of interviews with members of the sample group, with the aim of addressing the research questions. Darlington and Scott (2002:50) consider in-depth interviews to be useful for the following reasons:

- (a) they are an excellent means of finding out how people think and feel about a certain topic

- (b) they are particularly useful when the phenomenon under investigation cannot be observed directly
- (c) they enable the researcher to talk to people about both past and future events.

Since this study dealt with people's thoughts and feelings about the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process (a non-tangible, non-observable phenomenon), based on their experiences in the (recent) past and their ideas on how it ought to be in future, the in-depth interview seemed a suitable method to address these issues.

The first contact with participants in this study was in the form of a telephone call. In cases where individuals were not immediately available Unisa's internal electronic mail message system was used. As was mentioned earlier, it was at this stage that the context, purpose and outcome of the research, as well as the role that interviewing would play in the research, was explained to potential respondents. This first contact plays a very significant role in the entire interviewing process, because of the opportunity to build rapport, establish trust and develop a sense of connection with participants of the study (Darlington & Scott 2002:54). The ethical issue of informed consent is also relevant here and has been discussed elsewhere in this dissertation. This was all done in a collegial way that was aimed at making it as non-threatening to participants as possible. The aim was to ensure that this first contact enhanced the likelihood of the potential respondents' cooperation. Monette et al (2005 178) indicate that success is enhanced when the interviewer shares similar social characteristics to those of the respondents. I found the fact that I am a Unisa staff member, coupled with existing personal and professional relationships with the majority of the sample members, to be positive factors in getting the respondents to participate in the study.

Interviewees were, from the outset (after indicating their willingness to participate in the research), supplied with the two key questions underlying the research, namely:

- (a) What did you find to be effective/ineffective in the Excellence in Tuition *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process during 2005 and
- (b) How do you think the process could be improved?

This gave the interviewees time to reflect on the issue under investigation. After explaining the interview process and getting their consent to participate, an interview date and time was decided upon. Interviews were mostly scheduled within a week after the initial contact between respondent and researcher.

The suggestion by Banister et al (1994:55) of having a practice or rehearsal interview, that is doing a trial run on one's own or with a colleague before the actual interview, motivated me to prepare for the interviews in this manner. Introductory remarks that suited the specific interviewee's context, as well as the key questions and some probing themes were prepared and rehearsed beforehand. The equipment (audio cassette recorder) was then checked before each interview, after which a verbal statement of the date of the interview as well as the name of the interviewee was recorded on the first part of the audio tape. This practice prevented confusion and embarrassment later on.

The timing of the interviews was done in such a manner that it corresponded closely with the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* phase in which interviewees participated. In other words, those participants who were involved in the planning phase were interviewed first – as soon after the completion of this phase as possible. The next group of interviewees were the six lecturers who had submitted applications for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. This phase lasted from mid-April to the end of June 2005. Interviews, therefore, took place in close proximity to the lecturers' experience of submitting for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. The final group of interviewees were the three individuals involved in the evaluation phase (which took place from July to October/November 2005). Interviews with these participants took place during the last couple of months of 2005. The reason for scheduling the interviews in this manner was to keep the experience of participants of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process as close to the interview as possible. This enhanced memory of experiences and actions which adds to the credibility of the research.

Interviews were mostly conducted in respondents' offices. This was mainly done as a gesture of respect for the respondents (to save them the time of coming to my office) as well as making the experience as non-threatening as possible. Interviews were not necessarily limited to a certain time, but for the sake of not imposing on participants' busy schedules thirty minutes interviews were mostly the norm. Banister et al (1994:52) speak of power relationships in the research setting. By respecting the context of the interviewees in a variety of ways I maintained an "interpretive vigilance" (Figueroa & Lopez, as quoted in Banister et al 1994:52) as measure to ward off excessive control in a study that claims to be participative and consultative.

The fact that the interviews were held in Unisa offices raised a potentially challenging, yet interesting, issue, namely that of external noises that could disrupt the recording of

the interview. Darlington and Scott (2002:59) warn against these distractions and suggest that the only option is to “pause” the recorder in event of such a distraction. A number of these distractions were present during the interviews, such as outside noise (although I requested interviewees that all windows and doors be kept closed for the duration of the interview), telephone calls during an interview (after the first call the telephone would usually be taken off the hook), colleagues coming into the office and even mannerisms of some interviewees, such as knocking on the desk where the microphone was positioned while speaking or speaking too softly or unclearly. Interviewees were requested prior to the interview to be aware of these distractions and to limit them to a minimum. Yet they did occur. I followed the practice of keeping the audio recorder switched on in the case of less significant disruptions (such as outside noise), and stopping the recording only in extreme cases (such as a phone call, or a colleague entering the room). The issue of distractions was also discussed with the transcriber who followed the practice of indicating distracting elements in the transcription by either describing it in her own words (for instance, “noises – sounds like door opening”) or by marking uncertainties with dots (...) or question marks (???) where applicable.

Except for the two key questions mentioned earlier, I prepared a number of probes to be used during the interview. These were mainly based on my personal experience of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process or based on what was learnt from previous interviews. Different types of probing questions were used, for instance descriptive questions (what and how did things happen?), clarifying questions (what do you mean by ...?) and interpretative questions (how did you experience ...? what was it like for you to ...?) (see Darlington & Scott 2002:57, 58). Each interview, however, had its own dynamics and I had to align my questioning or probing to the direction and atmosphere of each individual interview. The result was semi-structured, in-depth interviews aimed at exploring exactly where the interviewees perceived the difficulties and gaps in the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process were (Banister et al 1994:51). The aim with the interviews was divergence and variety, rather than convergence and replicability.

Interviewees were aware of the fact that interviews would be audio taped and that the language of communication would be English. Consent to record interviews was also received beforehand. Individuals reacted differently to the recording of an interview. Some were visibly nervous and even articulated their anxiety in no uncertain terms, others became very formal and academic in formulating their views, while some were not intimidated by the recording at all. The majority of interviewees had prepared notes

(some very extensive) based on the two key questions they were given beforehand. This seemed to alleviate some of the tension that some respondents experienced with the recording that was made of the interview. Interview recordings were given to a professional person immediately after the interview, who transcribed the text. The reason for giving the audio recording to the transcriber immediately after the interview was to ensure that the researcher could assist if any part of the recording may have been unclear or corrupted and also to transfer data from a less usable to a more usable form (Johnson & Christensen 2000: 426).

The advantages of the interview, as set out by Monette et al (2005:181-182), and also Darlington and Scott (2002:49-51), outweigh the disadvantages. The following advantages discussed in the literature can be mentioned in relation to this experience:

- Respondents were motivated by their direct and recent involvement in the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process to supply extensive and complete information.
- Questions, issues or concepts that were not clear (both from the side of the interviewee and the researcher) could be explained.
- Flexibility could be built into each interview, for example, follow-up open-ended questions could be asked according to the specific context of the respondent.
- Since the researcher conducted all twelve the interviews himself, a holistic view of respondents' attitudes toward the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process could be detected.

3.4.4 Data analysis

3.4.4.1 Introduction

Data analysis is in essence the process of extracting meaning from observations and interviews. De Vos (2002:339) describes data analysis as the process of ordering, structuring and bringing meaning to the mass of collected data. The aim is to contextualise the results, that is, to understand people, groups and organisations within the context in which they act. This kind of thinking is largely inductive in nature, especially in the context of an exploratory or descriptive research project such as this one.

For qualitative research projects, such as this one, data collection, data analysis and drawing of conclusions occur more or less interactively and simultaneously (Monette et al 2005:429, also De Vos 2002:341). For instance, data collected in one interview may raise some issues related to theory formation, on which future interviews need to collect additional data. Monette et al (2005:430f) therefore follow an interwoven three stage approach of (a) data reduction and analysis, (b) data display, and (c) drawing conclusions and verifying theories. This study follows a data processing system that can collectively be called data analysis and that includes all the elements put forward by Monette et al.

3.4.4.2 *Data processing*

A set of practical steps concerning data processing (compiled from Anastas & MacDonald 1994; Flick et al 2000; Marlow 2005) were followed in this study. The steps are as follows:

- Re-read, re-look and re-listen the data (interview recordings and transcripts) several times.
- Clearly define the unit of analysis or meaning unit, whether it is a line, a paragraph, phrases, a theme, an idea, feelings, attitudes or events – or a combination of these. This unit of analysis has to conform to the following two criteria: (a) it must be heuristic (contribute to the aim of the research) and (b) it must be the smallest independent unit of meaning.
- Keep formal written notes on themes and ideas that are identified while revisiting the data. This includes designing a reference method that would indicate clearly where one sees what. Look, for example, for words that occur frequently. Assign provisional codes (also called *open coding*) to the categories that emerge from this stage of analysis. Consider these themes and ideas in their context.
- Based on one's close reading of the data in terms of meaning units (which is similar to study-reading of academic texts), reduce the data to conceptual, analytical or core categories. Test these categories on one or two interviews to determine how usable they are. Two types of categories may emerge, namely (a) indigenous or *in vivo* categories (mainly respondents' feelings about the matter, also called *emic codes*) and (b) researcher-constructed categories (these are categories the researcher applies to the data).

Categories may present themselves in the concrete or the abstract. They may be hidden (latent) or manifest (obviously or directly stated). They may be clustered (consist of divisions and sub-divisions). It is advisable to identify as many categories and sub-categories as possible in order to saturate the text.

- Use codes intensively around one category at a time (also called *axial coding*). The term “coding” may cause some confusion at this stage. Some use it as synonym for “categorising”, while others typify it as a type of shorthand to indicate the different categories. For the overall purpose of this study “coding” is regarded as the technique of categorising. However, in this narrower sense, “coding” indicates the act of assigning codes to the different categories and sub-categories (either letters, colours, shapes or anything else that suites the creativity of the researcher). This may also include specifying the occurrences of a concept (or idea, feeling, opinion) within a category and indicating specific relationships between one concept and another within this one category.
- Take notes (or memos) of and describe the method one uses to code the text. Describe in detail what each category entails.
- Identify similarities and differences between categories. This is the first step in interpreting the data, by (a) comparing data across respondents and (b) comparing and contrasting categories. This may lead to fusion of categories into an existing one or may lead to a totally new category. Comparing and contrasting categories may be done by means of classification systems, such as diagrams, that indicate the themes and their relationship to one another or causal flow charts, that visually represent the ideas emerging from the data in terms of patterns and possible causes (see data display techniques discussed earlier).
- Revisit the data and refine the codes, categories and domains.
- Validate the data continuously by (a) exploring and comparing rival or alternative hypotheses and (b) exploring negative cases (cases that do not fit the pattern). It may be a good idea to get feedback from respondents to determine whether they confirm the researcher’s conclusions. Validation of this kind was done for this study by sending the interpreted data back to participants to check for correct understanding of their views during the interviews.

3.4.4.3 Segmenting

According to Johnson and Christensen (2000:426) segmenting involves the division of data into meaningful analytical units. Such a meaningful unit can be a word, a single sentence or even a larger passage such as a paragraph. It was mainly the single concept that formed the unit of analysis for this study. Interview transcripts were read with these concepts in mind. Examples of such concepts are Timing (of the submissions for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*), Communication (sharing of information regarding the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*), (compiling the) Portfolio, (assessment) Criteria, and so on.

3.4.4.4 Coding

Coding is the process of marking segments of data with symbols, descriptive words or category names (Johnson & Christensen 2000: 427). The key research issues mentioned earlier served as the basis for coding the data for this study, namely (a) effective elements of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process, (b) ineffective elements and (c) suggestions to improve the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process. After reading the text of each of the transcripts line by line I placed descriptive words in the margins of the text. I further highlighted each of the three elements contained in the research questions mentioned above with colour markers to clearly demarcate the different segments of data.

The three key research issues constituted, what Monette et al (2005:432) call, domains within the general coding scheme, as opposed to specific content (finer codes and categories) within these general domains. This could, however, not have been the only basis for coding, due to the numerous nuances attached to these key research issues. This study therefore employs *interpretive coding*, which requires of the researcher to use his or her deep understanding of the social context of the study to place the field data into categories. This study also contains a strong element of *pattern coding*. This was an attempt to reduce the amount of data into more manageable amounts and so identify sections of the data as representing some abstract or theoretical theme or pattern that occurred in the data (Monette 2005:433). A combination of different types of coding served as cross-checking mechanism to ensure that the researcher does not attempt to fit all available data into one preconceived pattern.

3.4.4.5 *Categorising*

Data analysis necessarily includes category formation (De Vos 2002:344). This strategy has the following distinct features:

- (a) it does not quantify the data, but reduces and simplifies the data (by retaining words and their essential meanings),
- (b) the data create the codes and codes are therefore not imposed on the data from some pre-existing theory and
- (c) qualitative coding goes beyond measurement and forms an essential part of conceptual development and theory building (Monette et al 2005:430).

Categories become the building blocks of qualitative data analysis with categories forming a classification system characterising those data (Johnson & Christensen 2000:434). Lower and higher level categories emanate from the study with lower level ones being closest to the actual data collected and higher level categories operating on theory level. Chapters 4 and 5 of this report contain a discussion of these different levels of categories.

One way of showing the relationships between categories is through diagramming (Johnson & Christensen 2000:440). A diagram is therefore a plan, sketch, drawing or outline that demonstrates the relationship between categories. I utilised the network diagram (also called a concept map) to show direct and indirect links between segments, codes and categories.

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter attempted to outline the strategy of the qualitative research approach, which is interpretive and inductive in nature. It became clear from the discussion that the researcher is part and parcel of this process and therefore, together with the respondents, involved in the entire research endeavour. It was opined that the approach is an interactive and circular one with rather vague boundaries or parameters. Based on the sampling method and the ensuing interviews as data collecting and analysis strategy, it became clear that the ultimate search is for meaning. The next chapter continues on this path and presents the practical application of processing, evaluating and interpreting the data.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in chapter 1, this chapter contains the analysis of the research data as contained in the interviews. Certain guidelines for this process have been suggested in chapter 3. These introductory remarks attempt to elaborate on that.

Books on qualitative research methodology supply very little practical advice on how to proceed from data to report (see Potter 1996). No clear rules exist on how to transform respondents' discourses into the researcher's analytical discourse. Jensen (in Potter 1996:120) opines that this is mainly due to the nature of qualitative research methodologies where analysis depends on "the interpretative capacity of the scholar". It becomes clear from Potter's discussion on the lack of information about the process of sorting out the data that researchers need to map out their analytical procedures to their readers. This will be attempted in this study.

The approach to the analysis of data adapted in this investigation can, in the words of Potter (1996:122), be termed a *funnel procedure*. This procedure starts with a wide pass through the topic (in this case individual interviews) – that means, working through the material again and again. Then, with each revisiting of the data the focus becomes stronger, with a tighter frame on the evidence. Within the confines of this investigation the research question(s) would form the 'tighter frame', with the rest acting as a supportive and contextual frame of reference.

The term "*analysis*" will therefore cover the broad process of

- identifying themes from the data material
- constructing ideas that are suggested by the data
- demonstrating support for those ideas by means of *verbatim* quotes
- showing meaningful coherence of these ideas.

The goal here is *explanation*, which, according to Potter (1996:123), implies

- breaking data up into the smallest possible units
- systematically coding and collating lower level categories
- seeking meaningful, larger aggregates.

The goal is also *description*, which, according to Potter (1996:159-162), means

- displaying the facts in a straightforward way (a process which is not without interpretation)
- highlighting categories and commonsense actions within their actual settings
- conveying actions and categories in the words of participants themselves.

Methodology in this sense refers to (a) the method that was followed to analyse the data contained in the interviews, and (b) the method of reporting the results of the analysis. Following the guidelines for the analytic procedure that were highlighted in chapter three, as well as building upon the suggestions in the introduction above, I divided the analysis of each interview into six sessions or sittings. Each session contained the following process of analysis:

- Session 1:
 - Listen to the tape-recorded interview (at reduced speed) and follow the interview on the transcription.
 - Correct mistakes made by the transcriber and fill in any gaps left by the transcriber.
 - Identify those remarks by the interviewee that directly correspond with the issues raised in the research questions (i.e. concerning the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process, as well suggestions on the way forward).
 - Use preliminary markings (such as underlining, circling, bracketing) to highlight pertinent remarks and suggestions.

- Session 2:
 - Listen to the tape-recorded interview and follow the script in corrected format.
 - Categorise (identify and name) large themes that reflect the issues raised in the research questions. This is done by means of marginal notes.
 - Identify lesser themes that arise from the larger themes.
 - Continue to rectify transcription mistakes.

- Session 3:
 - Listen to the tape-recorded interview.
 - Create a concept map (while listening) which maps all the major themes, together with their related lesser themes.

- Session 4:
 - Listen to the tape-recorded interview and follow it on the script.
 - Determine whether the themes and related subthemes that were mapped during the previous session represent the interviewee's thoughts fairly and truly.
 - Add, blend or delete themes and subthemes where necessary.

- Session 5:
 - Devise codes for themes identified and mapped in session three (use a type of shorthand consisting of abbreviations, for example Task Team = TT, Way forward = WF, Role of Chairs and Directors = C/D, et cetera).
 - Read the transcribed text of the interview and fill in these codes in the margin where applicable.
 - Colour code themes that correspond directly with the three main issues raised in the research questions, namely (a) the effective aspects of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process, (b) the ineffective aspects and (c) suggestions how to improve the process. Themes relating to the effectiveness of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process were marked with a *green* highlighter pen, themes highlighting ineffective aspects are marked in *yellow*, while suggestions aimed at improving the process are marked in *orange*.

- Session 6:
 - Draw up a table with as many columns as interviews covered in each phase; allot a number to each interview (for example Interview 1, Interview 2, Interview 3, and so on – this is for the sake of protecting the identities of respondents).
 - Create as many rows in the table as themes that occur in each interview.
 - Compare the themes and subthemes across the interviews in one specific phase by identifying those themes that are similar; also identify themes that are unique or that contradict other themes.
 - Include these tables and discuss them in the report.

In this chapter therefore an account is provided of the findings from the empirical investigation. The chapter discusses findings on each of the phases of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* separately. I therefore start with *Phase One*, the planning phase. After providing a brief discussion of the sample for each phase, the main categories will be presented in diagram format followed by an in-depth discussion of each category and its respective themes. I will supply quotations throughout the discussion to substantiate the findings. Additional context will be supplied where necessary to complement the narrative. The same structure and approach will be followed for *Phase Two* (the submission of teaching portfolios) as well as for *Phase Three* (the evaluation of submissions).

4.2 PHASE ONE: PLANNING PHASE

It was highlighted in chapter 1 that this investigation can be divided into three distinct phases. Phase One is termed the *Planning Phase*, during which the Senate Tuition Committee selected individuals to form the Senate Task Team. The team's brief was to plan the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* by designing guidelines to be followed by Colleges. These guidelines included aspects such as a schedule for implementing the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process for that year, assessment criteria and rules and procedures for the evaluation of the submissions, which were in the form of teaching portfolios.

4.2.1 Composition of the sample

Interviews were conducted with three members of the Senate Task Team, whose work constituted the Planning Phase (see Appendix 3 for an example of one of these

interviews). This task team was specifically put together by the Senate Tuition Committee to plan and oversee the process of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* for 2005. Two individuals of the sample were at the time of the investigation chairing the Tuition Committee of their respective Colleges and were therefore members of the Senate Tuition Committee as well. The third person that formed part of the sample for this phase is a staff member of the Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development (ICLD) at Unisa and therefore a specialist in matters of open and distance teaching and learning. It is evident from this sample that these three individuals were purposively selected because of their rich experience of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process during this first phase.

4.2.2 Main categories

The findings from Phase One will be discussed under three broad categories, namely

- (a) planning forms an important part of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process,
- (b) the Senate Task Team stands at the centre of the process and
- (c) the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* should not be seen in isolation.

These categories and their accompanying themes can be presented diagrammatically as follows:

| PHASE ONE: Planning phase | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Category 1 | <i>Planning forms an important part of the Excellence in Tuition Awards process.</i> |
| Theme a Theme b | Planning starts with top management structures. Evaluate previous <i>Excellence in Tuition Awards</i> experiences before planning for a next round. |
| Category 2 | <i>The Senate Task Team stands at the centre of the process.</i> |
| Theme a Theme b | There is a need for people to drive the process. There should be more depth in the Task Team. |
| Category 3 | <i>The Excellence in Tuition Awards should not be seen in isolation.</i> |
| Theme a Theme b | There is need for a broader debate on tuition. Unisa structures need to support the <i>Excellence in Tuition Awards</i> process. |

4.2.3 Discussion

4.2.3.1 Category 1: Planning forms an important part of the Excellence in Tuition Awards process

The first theme in this category is that planning for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards starts with top management structures*, notably the Vice-Principal: Tuition and the Senate Tuition Committee of which she or he is the chair. It seemed from the interviews that top management's involvement in the planning of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* is regarded as crucial.

| |
|---|
| Theme a. Planning starts with top management structures |
|---|

'Top management' is in this case the Senate Tuition Committee, where matters of tuition within the University are addressed. Within the Unisa structures the Vice-Principal: Tuition acts as the chairperson of the Senate Tuition Committee. Participants regarded the Vice-Principal: Tuition as one of the champions of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* cause. This emphasises the important role that management officials dealing with tuition matters have to play in the Awards process. It is the Vice-Principal: Tuition who gives the official stamp of approval to all phases of the Awards, from the planning to the announcement of the winners of this competition. This involvement adds to the prestige of the Awards, one interviewee indicated.

Respondents reflecting on this first phase criticized the actions of top management structures quite severely. Some comments were: "I am not quite sure whether the Senate Tuition Committee announced to the University that the guidelines have been adopted ... or that the process has begun", and "I think there should be word from above which says: Go for it"; "... not to announce it immediately seems a little bit tardy". The fact that no official word was spoken on the commencement of the 2005 Awards process led to delays in Colleges, because "without anything official from above it is really difficult to respond" from the side of the Colleges. Because of the delays in the process schedule that was proposed by the Task Team, some Colleges took the initiative and proceeded with the process based on the guidelines put forward by the Senate Task Team. This resulted in individual academics preparing their submissions, seemingly unofficially, without any official announcement of the 2005 Awards by top management.

Recommendations and suggestions in this regard were numerous. One comment was that the Awards “needs to be embraced by management; management should announce the Awards and the Awards should be publicised once they’re made”. Elsewhere the same sentiment was echoed:

I think the process has to start with top management. They have to commit themselves to this and they should be the ones making the announcement and calling for people to submit their portfolios.

The role of management was compared to that of a starter at an athletic competition: “... the guy that says: go for it!”

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| Theme b. Evaluate previous Awards experiences before planning for a next round |
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A second important theme within this category is *evaluating previous Awards experiences before planning for another round of Awards*. The 2005 Awards was the second round of *Excellence in Tuition Awards* after it had been started in 2004. The 2004 process was not much to go by since it was done “hastily and sort of haphazardly”. Yet, it was seen as a necessary learning experience and because of that the “guidelines were simplified, shortened, made more user-friendly”. One participant experienced aspects of the 2004 process as “extremely rigid and voluminous”, but had the following to say about the 2005 process:

So when I came onto the Task Team investigating the criteria for the Awards for 2005, I thought the process was effective and first of all it was extremely consultative. That may be the case of previous years, but I simply was not aware of any consultation. But certainly in this for 2005 I was aware of consultation and what we have come up with seems to me a much more flexible and sensible approach to the Tuition Awards.

This was the result of an improvement in planning for 2005, based on the previous year’s experience. For all participants planning meant looking back at previous experiences. The 2005 Awards process therefore also ought to be looked at when planning for 2006, that is, “evaluate the outcomes of the 2005 Awards”, which “will determine how one proceeds next year”. Key indicators when planning for a next round would be, among others, “the number of responses, the enthusiasm that normal academics at Unisa approach this with”. Planning could further include looking back at the previous year’s

competition in terms of “strong points and weaknesses” and “use that as a basis to redesign the next year’s competition”.

4.2.3.2 Category 2: *The Senate Task Team stands at the centre of the process*

Participants regarded the Senate Task Team as being at the heart of the Awards process. It was especially the issue of *champions needed to drive the process* that stood out clearly.

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| Theme a. There is a need for people to drive the process |
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The idea of drivers or champions (also called “experts”) for the cause of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* was a recurring theme in the interviews. It was regarded as important that Task Team members were “key people who are interested in this ... who believe in this thing” and who “... drive it for the benefit of the University”. The Task Team members need, therefore, to pay attention to certain expectations and perform specific duties relevant and conducive to the Awards process, such as consulting with all stakeholders, determining what is achievable in terms of what academics can manage, facilitating debate amongst their constituencies and promoting quality in tuition. Members of the Task Team should, in general, act as champions for the sake of excellence in tuition.

One participant went a step further and suggested the institution of a “Tuition Portfolio” per College, “someone who could just sit and focus on tuition matters”. The Task Team would ultimately consist of these dedicated experts or drivers of tuition, “so that the Task Team we talked about is representative of the Colleges and is serious business, where College will invest resources”. This idea is closely linked to the theme of drivers, champions and experts who need to drive the Awards process and tuition in general. “We need drivers, we need people who believe in these things and have the time to drive it.”

One incident illustrates the need and consistency for champions for the Awards. The sudden absence of the 2005 chairperson from the Task Team, who was promoted to another position within Unisa, was a great disappointment to participants. This resulted in the removal of one of the champions of the cause. The untimely removal of an individual who fulfilled a key role in the Awards process, without any formal replacement,

therefore led to uncertainties and had a negative effect on the effectiveness of the process.

Theme b. There should be more depth in the Task Team

The Task Team further *needed more depth*. There needed to be in-depth presentations during Task Team meetings, in the form of previous winners sharing their experience with the Task Team members, “or perhaps even an external specialist in ODL” (Open and Distance Learning) who could supply Task Team members with examples of what was considered excellent materials and excellent tuition. This type of presentation would improve the effectiveness of the Task Team in that it would sensitise members to what kind of thinking and action is needed for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. Getting previous Awards winners to address the Task Team would add depth, since previous Award winners “were more in touch with the guidelines than anybody else in the University”.

It was however not as if there was no depth in the actions of the Task Team. The representatives of the Colleges who were members of the Task Team “certainly worked through the criteria ... in a very thoughtful way and there was quite a lot of contribution from their side”. The debate within the Task Team could, however, have been characterised by more depth in terms of “real awareness of what exactly those implications may be for them and their tuition”.

Suggestions were made on how to add depth to the work of the Task Team. It could, for instance, conduct a longitudinal research project that focused on specific aspects of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*, such as the influence of the Awards on the number of participants and quality of learning material. The Task Team could even create a document “that we’ll send out freely” to remind academics of the Awards. Its activities could become a standing issue on the agenda of the College Tuition Committee. The Task Team could organise lectures, workshops and seminars to inform the rest of the university community about issues relating to tuition, in general, and about the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*, in particular. Participants were convinced that it is the responsibility of the Task Team to “push the University in that particular direction”.

4.2.3.3 Category 3: *The Excellence in Tuition Awards should not be seen in isolation*

This category emphasises the fact that the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process forms part of other processes that are pertinent in the University, such as the current drive for (re)curriculation that is taking place in a number of Schools. Re-curriculating courses and qualifications became important after the merger between the former Unisa (Unisa), the former Technikon South Africa (TSA) and the distance education section of the former Vista University (VUDEC). New programme mixes and learning units emerged within the newly formed institution and therefore existing programmes and qualifications needed to be revisited and reconceptualised.

Theme a. There is a need for broader debate on tuition

A *broader debate concerning issues of tuition* is taking place at Unisa and participants felt that the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* should form part of this broader debate.

Some participants felt unsure about the level of academics' active engagement in debates about tuition issues, as represented by the assessment criteria for the Awards. As an illustration:

I am not sure myself to what extent those criteria were actually, not only read, but really considered, thoughtfully considered, by members of the various Colleges. It would be difficult for me to say therefore, to what extent the academic body at large actually contributed to the criteria or considered them.

The curriculation effort at Unisa was mentioned as "one of the platforms" to be utilised to extend the brief of the Task Team in matters of tuition. "We should find a way of linking re-curriculation to producing study material that would stand the test, and knowing what the criteria are for this competition we already know who the role players are and we start to involve those role players as much as possible in the production of study material". The *Excellence in Tuition Awards* was in a sense "an after-thought, when the study material was already there". The *Excellence in Tuition Awards* therefore has a role to fulfil other than just being a competition. The broader context is that of promoting excellence in tuition at Unisa, through the designing and development of excellent learning material.

The broader tuition debate may even include training academics in matters of open and distance teaching and learning. The initial or planning phase of the Awards process could therefore serve as a staff development phase, “where one actually uses this as a vehicle to deepen awareness about tuition”. Another aspect of the broader debate is quality assurance. “The competition as a whole [could] in fact perhaps be more specifically and explicitly tied to quality assurance initiatives in our organisation.” The Awards therefore form part of the broader education landscape existing of quality assurance imperatives, such as the Unisa policies dealing directly with tuition (Tuition Policy, Assessment Policy, Work Integrated Learning Policy and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy), as well as the Criteria for Accreditation of Programmes of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

Theme b. Unisa structures need to support the Awards process

Another aspect of the broader context in which the Awards should function includes the *support that is needed from the existing Unisa structures*, such as chairs of academic Departments and directors of Schools. These managers need to keep their focus on matters of tuition in such a way that they can identify modules that are eligible for the Awards. “I suppose the best thing would be to identify modules oneself as head of the department or director of the school. Those whom you think stand a chance, and then personally approach the people involved”. Participants felt that a general e-mail message was not good enough to motivate lecturers to take part in the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. Managers should approach lecturers personally and support them throughout the process. College tuition committees also have the responsibility to keep issues pertaining to the Awards on their agendas. This could ultimately lead to the formulation of an Excellence in Tuition Awards Policy. “I think that is overdue as a matter of fact... That’s where it should have started”.

4.2.4 Summary

The sample from Phase One of the Awards process highlighted three categories and a number of themes complementing these categories. From the discussion of category 1 it is evident that planning for the Awards should be done on the highest possible level, namely on Senate Tuition Committee level, with the chairperson playing a crucial role. Past experiences needed to be analysed carefully with the aim of building on the strengths and avoiding the mistakes.

One realises from the responses what the importance of the Senate Task Team is in the effective execution of the Awards process. This team's brief was initially to develop the practical aspects of the competition, such as formulating assessment criteria and developing time schedules. It seemed from the responses that more is expected of this committee, namely an in-depth debate and research on matters of tuition. Members of this task team should be experts in the field of tuition and drive the excellence in tuition concept throughout the entire institution. A broader view on their brief may contribute to a more effective Awards process and therefore more long-term results from which the University can benefit.

It also became clear from this discussion that the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* is not an isolated phenomenon but that it links in more ways than one with the broader educational scene at Unisa and even nationally.

4.3 PHASE TWO: SUBMISSION OF TEACHING PORTFOLIOS PHASE

Phase two of the process is termed the *Submission of Teaching Portfolios Phase*. Those lecturers who decided to enter the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* competition prepared and submitted their teaching portfolios during this phase. Seldin (1991:3-4) explains that a teaching portfolio is both a factual description of major strengths and teaching achievements and a presentation of solid evidence of effective teaching. Cole, Ryan, Kick and Mathies (2000:9) judge portfolios to provide authentic and meaningful documentation for assessment. Courts and McInneerey (1993:51) regard the portfolio as filling the gap between the "clean, artificial world of carefully controlled assessment" and the real world of lived experience. Teaching portfolios fall exactly in the category of evidence-based, authentic and experience-related assessment instruments.

The teaching portfolio for the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* therefore consisted mainly of a covering letter in which the lecturer explains aspects pertaining to the teaching of the module or modules that are submitted for the Awards. This may include a brief history of the design and development of the learning materials, a profile of the students involved, a detailed description of the teaching strategy or strategies followed and perhaps some personal notes on the educational philosophy subscribed to by the lecturer.

The teaching portfolio further contains physical evidence, in the form of exhibits, of what was discussed and showcased in the covering letter. Such evidence may include

minutes of meetings dealing with matters of tuition, examples of assessment tools used, copies of marked assignments, letters giving feedback to assignments, lesson plans for discussion classes or contact sessions, reflections on interviews with students, results of a research project linked to the teaching of the module or a reference list of material that influenced a personal educational philosophy. Lecturers needed to keep certain assessment criteria in mind when compiling their teaching portfolios. These criteria established largely qualitative benchmarks, thus focussing not so much on “[K]nowing how much instructional or research activity is occurring in an academic unit” (Middaugh 2001:149), but on how good that activity is. This reiterates the issue covered in the literature review (chapter 2), namely that the current climate in higher education demands accountability with respect to both productivity and programme quality.

4.3.1 Composition of the sample

Interviews were held with six academics who entered for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. (See Appendices 4 and 5 for examples of two interviews from this phase.) The interviewees covered a wide range of positions and included a head of an academic department (professor), a professor, two senior lecturers, a lecturer and a junior lecturer. It is interesting to note that all six of them had been at Unisa for quite some time.

4.3.2 Main categories

The findings from Phase Two will be discussed under three main categories, namely

- (a) communicating information regarding the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*,
- (b) compiling the teaching portfolio; and
- (c) lecturers’ reflections on the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards*.

These categories and their accompanying themes can be presented diagrammatically as follows:

| PHASE TWO: Submission of Teaching Portfolios Phase | |
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| Category 1 | <i>Communicating information regarding the Excellence in Tuition Awards</i> |
| Theme a | The availability of information |
| Theme b | The role of management structures in sharing information |
| Theme c | Getting assistance |
| Category 2 | <i>Compiling the teaching portfolio</i> |
| Theme a | Assessment criteria |
| Theme b | Gathering evidence |
| Theme c | Issues of time |
| Category 3 | <i>Lecturers' reflection on the Unisa Excellence in Tuition Awards</i> |
| Theme a | Personal circumstances of lecturers who submitted |
| Theme b | Reporting on one's teaching efforts |
| Theme c | The value of having tuition awards |

4.3.3 Discussion

4.3.3.1 *Category 1: Communicating information regarding the Excellence in Tuition Awards.*

All six interviewees raised the issue of information sharing. The following pertinent issues were specifically raised: Who should be making the initial announcement? What is the role of official structures such as College and School Tuition Committees and the Chair of Department in the communication process?

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| Theme a. Availability of information |
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The first theme to emerge in this category was that of the *availability of information*. Information about the *Excellence in Tuition Award* was available in some cases but totally lacking in others. Uncertainty was expressed about whose responsibility it was to communicate information about the Awards in general. It was not clear to some participants who took ownership of the Awards; "is it the Vice-Principal: Tuition? I don't know!" By the time the ICLD workshop was advertised on the internal electronic mail system (roughly mid-June 2005), one participant had not been aware that "there was something like Tuition

Awards going on”⁶. “So”, it was concluded, “I do not know who, where and when the communication goes out ... informing people of the initial information”. It was therefore not clear “who is sort of responsible for providing the information” at the higher levels.

There was, however, clear information available amongst respondents regarding the Unisa **Research Awards**. Since one participant was a member of the College Research Committee, information about these awards was readily available; it is “there these issues are discussed. Then you know about it. But the Tuition Awards is not that known”.

In contrast to the previous experience, another participant indicated that the information that was received was “quite clear”. It might have been due to “my own sort of awareness of the process because I had the Department’s needs and Department’s interests at heart ...” this participant reflected. This experience of efficient information sharing was repeated later on by the same participant:

... it was very clear what the procedures were, what the criteria were and where it [the portfolio – CIR] had to go on very practical terms; we knew exactly where we had to go to.

On the lowest level in the Department we had adequate information to do it [the portfolio – CIR]. And if it was the College Tuition Committee [that was responsible for sharing information – CIR], it was work well done.

The issue of the availability of information about the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* was raised by all the participants. One participant reflected that while it was clear where the information was coming from, namely the tuition committee of the College, it still took some personal effort to track down the relevant information. According to this participant the information had not “come filtering directly down”. This directly influenced the School Tuition Committee, who, as a result, was “working in the dark”. With the School Tuition Committee not having all the information about the Awards, the next level in the information chain, namely the Department Tuition Committee became totally side-lined

⁶ This researcher undertook, in the light of the 2004 experience of limited information sharing, to conduct a workshop on the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. Due to an already set schedule for the ICLD Discussion Forums this workshop could only be held during June 2005. This may have come too late for some lecturers who attended it and who heard about the Awards for the first time, while others seized the opportunity and still submitted their portfolios by the due date of 30 June 2005. This is what is meant when respondents refer to the “ICLD workshop”.

and did not play any role in the Awards process. The result of this lack of information sharing was that the lecturer who wished to enter the Awards competition had to ask around about the guidelines and conduct a personal investigation in search of relevant information.

What was needed, according to one participant, was 360 degree information sharing. By this was meant that information about the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* had to come from all the relevant role players. Lecturers therefore needed to hear the same message from the tuition committees of the Department, the School and the College, as well as from the ICLD (Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development).

Theme b. The role of management structures in sharing information

A second theme in this category that is closely linked to the previous one is that of the *role of management structures in sharing of information* relevant to the Awards. It is important to elaborate a bit on remarks regarding the role of the Chair of Department in the Awards process. One participant, at the time of the investigation, headed an academic Department and therefore had the needs and interests of the Department at heart. In practical terms this meant that the Chair should raise "... awareness and to emphasise the importance of this for the colleagues". The value of the Awards for the Department was seen as being "a kind of opportunity to measure us against others", to break the isolation in which the department practices its tuition, because "we don't really know if we are on *par* in terms of our tuition strategies". This participant therefore made a direct link between sharing of information by the head of the department and the benefits it had for the teaching efforts within that department.

Not all participants were fortunate to be in a College, School or Department where people in leadership positions saw their responsibility as clearly as in the abovementioned case. It was mentioned under the previous theme that although information was sent to heads of departments one participant still had to "chase around a little bit looking for exactly where those portfolio guidelines were. In fact, it had been sent to the heads of department. So, I had to personally go and request them". One participant reported emotionally about the lack of support and empathy from an uninformed Chair of Department. One interviewee put it this way:

So, the School Tuition Committee sort of heard about it via, via, via ...; the same way as the academics and at no point did they say, sending out a message

saying: 'You know, guys, let's go for it. The School Tuition Committee really encourages you to participate.

To this was added that this specific School Tuition Committee was "not fully informed" and "working in the dark" because they did not know exactly what their brief was.

It was clear from the interviews that not everyone in management positions, especially the chairs of departments and the chairs of tuition committees, shared the same dedication to the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process. In some cases this led to a lot of uncertainty about what information had to be used to get started with one's teaching portfolio. One participant felt that the academic Department should ratify a lecturer's submission and in this way add its approval to the submission and recognise the effort that had gone into it. Candidates needed a lot of support during the submission phase, which brings us to the third and last theme in this category.

Theme c. Getting assistance

It is clear from the discussion so far that the submission of teaching portfolios phase should be characterised by support and guidance. The third theme in this category deals with *getting assistance* while compiling one's teaching portfolio. While some participants preferred to attempt the effort independently, without the assistance of peers, some felt that they needed a lot of assistance in this regard.

It seemed pertinent from a number of interviews that the issue of information sharing and support to those lecturers who entered the Awards process go hand in hand. Support and assistance can be supplied in a number of ways. One participant thought that it

would be a nice additional touch if, just maybe as an optional extra, you could get a letter from your Department Tuition Committee or head of department saying, you know: 'We second this person's application or submission'. That might be nice.

Another participant had the following to say about assistance:

I think they [the Department – CIR] should have taken your hand and that they just have to say: 'Let's see what you have done'. I would have liked him [Chair of Department - CIR] to read through this [portfolio – CIR] ... and just give you that guidance.

It was suggested that, in the light of Chairs' full schedule, a senior member of the department be appointed to fulfil this mentoring responsibility.

Still on the issues of information sharing and assistance, participants indicated that the Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development (ICLD) played a crucial role in this regard. The ICLD presented a workshop on 12 June 2005 as part of their Discussion Forum series. I facilitated this specific workshop during which issues surrounding the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*, such as the rationale for such an award, the process to be followed (dates, evaluation panels, procedures), the assessment criteria and the portfolio, were discussed. During the workshop a number of portfolios from previous award winners (2004) were available for perusal. The date of the workshop (three weeks before the submission date for portfolios for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*) was problematic, but since it had already been scheduled it could not be changed. Originally the workshop theme was not to be on the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. By that time I was heavily involved in the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process and I approached the Director of the ICLD with the request that the theme be changed to cover *Excellence in Tuition Awards* issues. The motivation was to offer academics a final opportunity to consider entering for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* and, also, an opportunity for those lecturers who had already started working on their portfolios to fine-tune them, if necessary.

The six participants expressed a lot of appreciation for this opportunity during the interviews with them. Some of them only heard about the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* for the first time during this workshop. The ICLD workshop was therefore regarded as an important part of the information sharing and assistance process. One participant mentioned that

the workshop itself really, I think, provided good guidance and we got feedback on that workshop informally via e-mail – the presentation of what happened there and also via the people who were attending that workshop.

Together with the information that came from one College Tuition Committee, the ICLD workshop ensured that “we were quite well informed”, one participant concluded. One participant missed the workshop opportunity due to official absence from the University, but said that it “would have been very useful if I had gone to your workshop regarding putting the portfolio together”. The presentation, together with the Task Team guidelines were communicated after the workshop via electronic mail and could, therefore, be used in preparation of the teaching portfolio by someone who did not attend the discussion.

This brings us to the next category that deals specifically with the compiling or putting together of the teaching portfolio for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*.

4.3.3.2 Category 2: *Compiling the teaching portfolio.*

A number of themes emerged in this category and each of them will be discussed. There is no order of importance or sequence attached to these themes and the discussion will therefore be done randomly.

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| Theme a. Assessment criteria |
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The first theme that needs exploration is that of the *assessment criteria* that were adopted to assess the submissions (see Appendix 2). The guidelines formulated by the Task Team contained six assessment criteria. Braskamp and Ory (1994:60-61) remind us that criteria are indicators of quality and therefore provide the specific bases for judging quality. Assessment criteria establish the specific dimensions of the quality that lecturers need to establish in their teaching. Submissions for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* therefore had to comply with specific criteria to be regarded as excellent teaching.

In general the assessment criteria were regarded throughout the university in a very legalistic and prescriptive fashion, which may have led to feelings of despair. This is supported by the words of one participant who mentioned that those lecturers who attended the ICLD workshop reported to their Department that “it is such a huge task to do that” and therefore they were not willing to tackle it; “because it seemed to be too much of a hassle; a very difficult, huge process; quite a lot of effort to prepare portfolio for evaluation”. Even those who did attempt the portfolio regarded the criteria as “too specific” and initially had problems finding evidence to meet the criteria.

However, the fact that some participants actually interpreted the criteria in a much less prescriptive manner made it possible for them to proceed with the preparation of a portfolio: “It was a combination of looking at the criteria ... and following my own head and guided by what I had available”. Some criteria were regarded as not very relevant for a specific module and participants therefore had to judge which criteria were more applicable to them than others. One participant, who had to rely on minimal information due to official absence from the University at the time, could proceed with the portfolio exactly because the Director of the School indicated that “these guidelines weren’t very strict”. The applicant therefore knew that “we didn’t have to adhere to them very strictly”. This is not saying that it was an easy process; it was acknowledged that it was “quite difficult” and that the process of compiling the portfolio was not without anxiety and uncertainty.

After coming to grips with the set of criteria, participants prided themselves on the fact that their submissions contained their own work and reflected the fact that they followed their own heads most of the time. This shows that applicants were free to interpret the criteria according to their personal circumstances. One participant reflected on the experience as follows:

I liked the fact that they [the criteria – CIR] were sort of organised for you into, I think, five or six headings which I then used as the headings of my own portfolio. But at no point they were prescriptive guidelines; they were just saying these are some of the things you could include. But it was very much left to the individual to make of it what he or she wanted, which I liked ... we were encouraged to be independent

Later on in the interview this same interviewee stated the following: “I believe that those that are really inspired by tuition and feel that it’s their role in life are creative people anyway. I don’t think any of us as academics like a prescriptive form to be thrown on us”. The fact that many lecturers perceived the assessment criteria as a stumbling block in entering for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*, could be ascribed to the lack of debate within the University on these issues, as was highlighted by participants in the Planning Phase.

Theme b. Gathering evidence

The connection between the assessment criteria and the *gathering of evidence* lies in the fact that lecturers who submitted for the Awards had to give proof of how they complied with the criteria by providing tangible evidence, as mentioned earlier. For example, if a criterion indicated that the module had to have gone through a design and development process, the participant had to supply evidence of such a process, for instance minutes of planning meetings, drafts of chapters, comments on the material by peers and specialists, collaboration with the ICLD, and so on.

Closely related to the “huge effort” it took to compile the teaching portfolio, is the issue of gathering evidence of teaching excellence to be included in the portfolio. It is the purpose of a teaching portfolio to establish and promote a culture of evidence amongst lecturers (see Seldin 1991:3). Lecturers need to be able to demonstrate their efforts to excel in tuition by providing proof or evidence. Two issues caused this aspect of the portfolio to be a major stumbling block for the majority of applicants, namely (a) the time available to compile the portfolio and (b) the (non)availability of much of the evidence to accompany the portfolio. The issue of time will be discussed later on in this category.

One participant submitted a teaching portfolio on a module that was developed by a team of lecturers over a period of time. This participant highlighted the fact that team members “haven’t kept, for example, e-mails of their interactions with their students”. Sufficient and relevant evidence to include in the portfolio was, therefore, not always available when compiling a teaching portfolio. More than one participant complained that they were not aware of the fact that evidence had to be kept for possible future use. As was highlighted earlier on, participants therefore had to use the evidence available to them. This led to some level of anxiety for they were not sure whether they would then comply with all the assessment criteria.

One participant explained how working on a module over a long period of time influenced the collecting of evidence. For this participant, a module is an organic entity and, therefore follows a “non-formally documented process”. Developing study material is not a “pre-structured process”; it is not in all cases neatly planned and presented, but develops over time and in accordance with specific needs of students and circumstances of lecturers. Therefore, instead of being a pre-planned process it rather has “cycles, reiterations, bits of planning”. It is thus not possible to provide clear-cut evidence in all

cases, according to this participant. Another participant found the evidence part not as challenging, because most of the required evidence was available. This was mainly due to the fact that the design and development of the learning material was done in a structured and planned manner. One participant regarded herself “lucky that I am so organised”, and could consequently lay her hands on the relevant evidence to include in the portfolio.

There were further differences of opinion on what to regard as evidence for the portfolio. While some felt that the study package was sufficient, others felt that the submission should include more than merely the study package, but also include information such as “the history of the module, the type of students ... how they learn, what are their problem areas, what helps them”, as well as lecturers’ experiences over a long period of involvement in a module. The more holistic view to the evidence held that it should include

[T]he whole process of working with a student – a problem student – and helping the student pass; how you do that; how can you incorporate that into the package.

Others felt that evidence should contain only tangible items, such as a study package (study guide, tutorial letters, examination papers and statistics on the examinations). Those elements of the evidence which are of a more philosophical nature, such as a lecturer’s personal educational philosophy and didactic approach were severely criticised by some. These were seen as “touchy-feely, non-paper based things” that are difficult to compile and also difficult to assess. One participant advocated for evidence that indicated clearly “what you did for your students up to the end”.

It was suggested that lecturers be alerted to the idea of keeping track of both formal and informal feedback from students as evidence for a possible future portfolio. It was also suggested that each academic Department create a data base of evidence such as pass rates of each module, which a lecturer could use for portfolio purposes.

Theme c. Issues of time

It was largely due to a perception that the portfolio was “too large in scope” that many lecturers shied away from participating in the Awards. This raises an important issue, namely the *time* it took to compile the teaching portfolio. Some participants were of the

opinion that they needed three to four months to compile the portfolio, while others suggested that two to three months would be sufficient to complete the portfolio. This was especially due to the time it took to gather relevant evidence for the portfolio. Participants repeatedly stated that the time to work on their portfolios was too limited. Some did it in “spare times”, while it took others two weeks of focused effort. One participant said that the portfolio was done “on the run”.

Due to official duties the portfolio of the participant who was also Head of Department had to be done “over hastily” and “in spare times”, since “I didn’t have much time to do it; so, I didn’t actually systematically had the time to put away three days or four days or a week to put the portfolio together”. It was also mentioned that due to the time constraints it was impossible to include the rest of the team of lecturers responsible for the module in the portfolio development process. The result was that the portfolio was compiled individually, although the teaching of the module was a team effort.

Many other reasons were mentioned for the fact that portfolios were done hastily. Two interviewees heard about the Awards late, one due to a lack of information sharing through official channels, while being on Research and Development leave caused the other participant not to be on campus when the information was circulated. Another participant blamed it on the fact that “there was a hold-up somewhere along the line”, which refers to the fact that information regarding the Awards was not available to, or made available by, official structures. This issue has come up repeatedly in the discussion so far. Some other delays were caused by personal circumstances, such as illness, while some could be traced back to departmental limitations: “Our resources are very limited; so this was done on a shoe string”, one participant recalled.

Something that would perhaps help to speed up the process of compiling the portfolio, one participant suggested, would be if the department kept an updated data basis on statistical information, such as student pass rates, that could easily be accessed by a participant for inclusion in the portfolio.

Staying with the time factor connected to the portfolio, participants lamented the fact that the *date of submission* of the portfolio coincided with other departmental responsibilities, namely the preparing of Tutorial Letter 101s for the following year, and, especially, marking of examination scripts at the end of the first semester. According to the guidelines of the Task Team the submission date for the Awards was 30 June 2005. “June for us [lecturers – CIR], as well as end of May, is a terribly busy time of the year”,

and “The date [of submission of the portfolio – CIR] is a big negative for me. End of June is a silly time, because that is the middle of 101s and marking time!” The date determined by the Task Team for the portfolios to be submitted definitely seemed problematic and close consideration need to be given to it in future.

4.3.3.3 Category 3: Participants’ reflection on the Unisa Excellence in Tuition Awards

Although the experience of submitting for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* went hand in hand with feelings of loneliness, uncertainty and anxiety, participants had an overall feeling of accomplishment. This category deals with participants’ reflections on the Awards in general, as well as submitting their teaching portfolios, in particular. It is important first to consider the personal circumstances of those lecturers who submitted for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*.

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| Theme a. Personal circumstances of lecturers who submitted |
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It became clear from the discussion so far that the circumstances of participants played a crucial role in this phase of the Awards. A wide variety of circumstances became evident from the interviews. One participant was on sick leave during this phase of the Awards, while another was on sabbatical or research and development leave at the time. This caused them to be off campus, which resulted in their missing crucial information on the Awards that was circulated on the intranet. Another participant was, as mentioned earlier, head of a department at the time. This was both positive and negative. On the positive side the participant was in a managerial position and therefore well placed to obtain information on the Awards. It was also beneficial for the Department in that the information could be shared with the rest of the Department. This participant felt it to be important for someone from the department to participate in the Awards since it served as a benchmark for their teaching efforts. On the negative side the compilation of the portfolio added an extra workload to that of managing an academic department. For this reason the portfolio was “over hastily done in spare times”.

Another participant was fortunate enough to be a member of the departmental Tuition Committee. This increased the chances of learning about the Awards and in case of doubt the relevant people could be asked for advice. A fifth participant was not aware of the Awards due to an environment where there is a lack of information sharing and where the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* is not regarded as that important. The sixth participant was at the time of the investigation a junior member of a Department and was

nominated by the Director of the School to submit for the Awards. Since the relevant Department was not directly involved the participant experienced a lack of support from the head of department.

Theme b. Reporting on one's teaching efforts

It seemed from the interviews that a lot of reflexive action went into the experience of submitting for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. It was considered by participants to have been an "interesting undertaking, because I realised I put more thought into the development of these modules and there is a lot more in it than I realised". Reporting on one's teaching efforts was regarded by another participant as a worth while effort and an opportunity to reflect on and showcase twenty years of teaching and "it actually made me think back"; "I think I have done a lot of good stuff here in terms of tuition". One participant reflected that it was

a very important process, I think, to go through as a lecturer, because it gives you a chance to consolidate all your thinking, put everything together in one file and it is like a feel good factor, pat yourself on the back; get it all together; it looks good, you feel good. I wrote a five page report which is also a nice way of, yes, to start articulating all the things I have been thinking about the course for some time and hadn't put in one place.

It is noteworthy to make special mention of a remark by a participant from a numerically orientated discipline. Frustration was experienced with having to express oneself in the portfolio in words only, that is, in narrative form. This individual felt that "the explanation" was "going on too long" and that all lecturers "are not good with words; we are good with numbers". Whether this is a general fact amongst academics in numerical disciplines is debateable. However, this participant felt frustration with the suggested way of presenting the portfolio, namely as a narrative. This indicates once more that a certain amount of freedom has to be built into the guidelines and criteria. Applicants need to feel free to present their work in a way that suits their talents and circumstances.

In general, it seemed to have been a positive experience. This anticipates the next theme, namely the value of having a tuition award at Unisa.

On the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* as such one participant said, “I think we should encourage the Awards; it’s a good thing and it should go forward”. The same positive attitude is reflected in another remark: “I think this Tuition Award was overdue long ago”

The main reason given for this is the recognition it gives to lecturers who “are here for the love of it; they are here to teach”. Participants felt that excellent lecturers don’t get any reward for what they do and that there has up to now been no merit system to recognise good teaching. Due to Unisa’s heavy emphasis on research, tuition is mostly regarded as the “silent part of our job”, “background noise”. Selection committees that deal with promotions seldom, if ever, are interested in “how many students did you train”, but rather focus on “which international journal did you publish [in] and are you sort of recognised by your peers in your research field”. The dualism between research and teaching often surfaced. Teaching was merely a statistical note on the annual year report, while research was encouraged in a variety of ways. There are those lecturers who value the teaching side of their job just as important as research and the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* offers an opportunity for recognition and showcasing of teaching efforts. Other benefits of the Awards have already been mentioned, such as the opportunity of breaking through the isolation of departments in terms of their teaching practices and showcasing one’s career as a teacher. The Awards further gives lecturers the opportunity to benchmark their teaching against generally recognised criteria.

One participant, however, had mixed feelings about the idea of a tuition award. On the one hand it was highlighted that a competition of this kind unfortunately has only “one winner and many losers” while, on the other hand, there should be more recognition for excellent teaching efforts, especially in the light of the “strong drive of research”. The issue is, however, not with research as such, but that the university might lose sight of tuition. This participant regarded himself as having “a strong commitment to tuition – that’s why I am here; that’s what I like doing”. It became clear that participants are serious about teaching and that they regard the Awards a commendable initiative as well as a way of expressing their love of teaching.

4.3.4 Summary

Phase 2 was overshadowed by the issue of compiling the teaching portfolio and participants regarded it as a daunting task. Yet, it became clear that the portfolio cannot be seen in isolation. It is firstly, closely related to the issue of information sharing since participants need to be aware of the guidelines associated with the Awards. It seemed further that it was also the timing factor (time that the information reaches lecturers, time in which to compile the portfolio, as well as the time of the academic year allocated for submissions) that contributed to the success or failure of the Awards process. This issue, therefore, needs serious revision to ensure the efficiency of future Awards processes.

4.4 PHASE THREE: EVALUATION PHASE

The following section contains an analysis and discussion of the third and last phase of the investigation, namely the *Evaluation Phase*.

4.4.1 Composition of the sample

Interviews were held with three members of the internal evaluation panels. (See Appendix 6 for an example of an interview from this phase.) These three interviewees are senior members of the academic staff who, at the time of the investigation, each filled the position of Director of a School. All three participants were purposively sampled due to their rich experience of tuition matters in their respective Colleges, as well as the fact that they acted as convenors of the internal evaluation panels for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. In this capacity they also had the task of finding suitable external evaluators for the submissions. Their experience in the evaluation phase of the Awards process was therefore of paramount importance for this investigation. It was explained earlier on that external evaluators were not included in the sample of evaluators. It was felt at the time that the internal evaluators reflected sufficiently on issues pertaining to the external evaluation process, and that this should be sufficient for the purpose of this investigation.

4.4.2 Main categories

The findings from Phase Three will be discussed under three main categories, namely (a) the internal evaluation process, (b) the external evaluation process and (c)

evaluators' views on the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. These categories and their accompanying themes can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

| PHASE THREE: Evaluation Phase | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Category 1 | <i>The internal evaluation process</i> |
| Theme a | Constitution and tasks of the panel |
| Theme b | Challenges in the process |
| Category 2 | <i>The external evaluation process</i> |
| Theme a | Constitution and tasks of the panel |
| Theme b | Challenges in the process |
| Category 3 | <i>Evaluators' views on the Excellence in Tuition Awards</i> |
| Theme a | Reflection on the Awards in general and the 2005 |
| Theme b | Awards in particular Views on the way forward |

4.4.3 Discussion

4.4.3.1 Category 1: *The internal evaluation process*

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| Theme a. | Constitution and tasks of the panel |
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A discussion of the *constitution* of the internal evaluation panels will be followed by one on the challenges experienced in the process of internal evaluation.

It was stated in the Senate Task Team Guidelines (see Appendix 2) that the internal evaluation panels could consist of the Chair of the School Tuition Committee (who acts as convenor of the panel), together with members from that School who have a specialist interest in the discipline covered by the submission. An ODL specialist also had a role to play on the internal evaluation panel, namely to assure the quality of the learning experience (the total curriculum) in terms of open and distance learning principles. It became clear from the interviews that internal evaluation panels did not follow these guidelines slavishly. Each School had its own unique context and therefore interpreted the guidelines accordingly.

One participant who was an Acting Director of a School at the time of the investigation indicated that he and the Executive Dean of that College formed the internal evaluation panel. In another case a very informal process was followed in constituting the panel and panel members “managed to sort it out very smoothly and in a collegial manner”. In this case the chairperson of the School Tuition Committee acted as convenor. “I was

able to draw evaluators from the Tuition Committee in the School”, the participant recalled. One other person from the convenor's own Department formed the second member of the panel. A “little debate” ensued, however, regarding the question whether a member of the Department from where the submission came should be included on the panel or not. The participant reflected on this issue as follows:

We thought it might lead to ethical problems or difficulties, but we sorted that out as a group and came to the conclusion that it was perfectly feasible, in fact, necessary as for the level of expertise.

An interesting issue that came up in two of the interviews on this phase of the process was the role of the Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development (ICLD) in the evaluation process. Some felt that the ICLD should be excluded from this process. A wide range of reasons were given for this view. One view was based on the fact that since the module that was submitted for the Awards had been developed in conjunction with the ICLD, there was no need to include an ODL specialist on either the internal or the external evaluation panel. It was mentioned earlier that it is one of the ICLD's functions to assist academic departments in the process of designing and developing learning material. It was therefore felt that if “the course or module that is submitted for the Excellence in Tuition price was not developed in conjunction with the ICLD, it won't make it”, and later on, “... if ICLD is not involved in the design of the product, we [the internal panels of this College – CIR] would not consider it [for the Award - CIR]”. The exclusion of the ICLD from the evaluation panel was therefore in this case not caused by any negative attitude towards the ICLD. The opposite is true. This School regards the contribution of the ICLD so highly that they will not even consider a module for the Awards that had not been developed in co-operation with the specialists from the ICLD.

Another participant also reflected on the role of the ICLD in the evaluation process, but from a totally different angle. Although an ICLD staff member was present at a meeting of the internal evaluation panel in this School, the School remains hesitant to include the ICLD in future in either the internal or the external evaluation process. A negative experience in a previous round of Awards was given as reason for this view and “that puts a bit of a question mark about the objectivity of the ICLD itself”. Furthermore, the ICLD, according to this participant, looks too much “at the design aspect”. This last idea was echoed by one other participant who stated that there is too much emphasis in the guidelines on matters of design and development of the study material and not enough on teaching of the subject content of a module. “What we are looking for is the tuition

output more than the construction of the design of the tuition material" this participant said.

Secondly, issues pertaining to the *tasks* of the internal evaluation panels were highlighted by these three participants. It has already been mentioned that some panels followed a very informal approach. This was reflected in the way some went about their tasks as evaluation panel. After the portfolio was submitted to the convenor, for example, it was circulated amongst the panel members by delivering it by hand to the next person's office: "We simply trudged to one another's office Somebody started it and then passed it on to the next member of the panel; so there was no difficulty there." Once the portfolio reached a panel member "... the general idea was that we were free to interpret the criteria in terms of our own discipline and our own academic integrity and one assumes the professionalism of one's colleagues". This last remark reflects the atmosphere of openness, freedom and informality in which the evaluation process took place in that School.

Another panel followed an equally informal, but more direct approach. The task of that internal panel was summarised as follows:

The Dean and I sat as a committee and discussed it and had a look at the portfolio that was submitted which met the criteria and decided that, on the face of it, it was a suitable application and we put that out to an external evaluator.

This emphasises the freedom that panel members felt in interpreting the guidelines suggested by the Task Team. The freedom of approach is also highlighted in a third approach where the panel "... followed another route. We regarded the [Senate Task Team - CIR] guidelines as guidelines". This School's evaluation panel, subsequently used a different set of criteria (based on the criteria set out in the guidelines), attached weights to the criteria and judged the portfolio also on the grounds of the comprehensiveness of the submission. "The mere fact that the person was willing to go to that extreme to compile a portfolio of that magnitude satisfied us that at least the external process should proceed", the participant said.

The process of internal evaluation was, however, not free of challenges.

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| Theme b. Challenges in the process |
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Although the internal evaluation process went smoothly to a large degree, frustrations were expressed clearly and frankly. It is important for future Awards to take clear notice of the following challenges and frustrations.

The criteria as set forth in the Task Team Guidelines seemed to have caused huge frustrations among evaluators. The criteria for assessing the submissions were put forward in the guidelines drawn up by the Senate Task Team. Some issues regarding the assessment criteria were the following:

- they are difficult to comprehend, which may have put many lecturers off from participating in the Awards
- they rarely cover issues relating to subject content
- they rely too heavily on the NADEOSA (National Association for Distance Education and Open Learning Organisations of South Africa) set of criteria and minimum standards; which are not officially recognised by the higher education sector, as in the case of the standards of the Council on Higher Education (CHE)
- there is too large an emphasis on matters of course design and development in the criteria.

One of the participants mentioned that some evaluators “might have thought that the long list of criteria was intimidating”, but went on by stating that “the criteria weren’t intimidating once one got to understand them, explore them. But they can create an impression of being intimidating and almost mechanical, mechanistic. That’s a possible problem”. The criteria issue was regarded as one amongst other “problems for consideration”.

In two out of the three cases under discussion the fact that there was only one submission per School created unique problems. Some raised the issue of norm referenced assessment versus criterion referenced assessment. Since there was only one submission to evaluate, some were not certain how to apply the criteria. This issue becomes pertinent in the light of the fact that Unisa lecturers are mostly accustomed to norm-referenced assessment, where individual results become the norm for the entire cohort of students and the success of an entire cohort is judged according to that norm.

Gravett and Geysler (2004:96) define norm-referenced assessment as involving “the assessment of each learner’s performance in relation to the performance of others – it assesses by comparison” and state clearly that this kind of assessment is rejected within an outcomes-based approach. Therefore, the panels had to adjust their assessment approach to that of criteria referencing, where assessment criteria are statements that describe the standard to which learners must perform (Gravett & Geysler 2004:95). It caused uncertainty and one participant flagged it as “a problem for consideration and discussion”.

Another concern was raised regarding the issue of a single participant per School. The concern was based on the issue of awarding the prize to only one person, since “... a study guide is something that grows over many years and it is very difficult to identify the exact contribution of a particular candidate; ... there are always other staff that participate”. Although this panel decided to award the entire winning prize to the one candidate, “it can be contested by other staff members.” It is especially in the light of the team approach to course design and development in an open and distance learning environment that one would like to see a team submitting for the Awards and sharing the prize money according to input and responsibility within the team.

Another serious problem the internal panels encountered was the lack of support from the University’s side in assisting them with the evaluation process. One participant categorised the support in terms of (a) financial support and (b) institutional support.

Under financial support the issue of remuneration of external evaluators became a serious issue. Since the interviewee regards the work to be done by the external evaluator “at anytime the equivalent of the effort that goes into examining a thesis”, this School allocated an amount of R2000.00 to serve as honorarium for its external evaluator. It was however communicated to this School that the ODL body that renders this kind of service actually charges R4000.00 per evaluation. Since these funds had not been budgeted for in the School a suitable fund had to be found from which funds could be transferred for this purpose. Within the Unisa system of departmental resource funding this became a huge obstacle in the Awards process. There was further, according to this interviewee, no consistency in this regard amongst Schools who make use of external evaluators for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. Another problem may be the fact that, since there are not many external bodies who can offer ODL expertise, every School tends to use the same people as evaluators.

On the institutional side, panel members found that there was no support from the University's side to support in the logistics of transporting the portfolios to external evaluators who may be at another university or in another city. Problems were experienced concerning ways to get the teaching portfolios to the external evaluators. Internal evaluators had to physically take the portfolios to the external evaluators or make arrangements to this effect. There were further budgetary implications if one wanted to send the portfolio by courier service. Sending it by postage mail may place the "sensitive material" in danger of getting lost or damaged.

Adding to the lack of institutional support, it was stated that the panel did not know where to go to approach an external ODL specialist to act as evaluator. Participants "would have preferred to know that there was an appointed external evaluator". This seemed like a pertinent issue and it was suggested that "[I]t is a matter for the University to resolve it. I don't think it can be resolved in the Tuition Committee as such".

It seems from this discussion that the internal evaluation process was a mixed bag of positives and negatives. Pertinent issues that had a significant influence on the process came to the fore.

4.4.3.2 *Category 2: The external evaluation process*

Although category 2 is closely related to category 1, it offers a different perspective to the evaluation process. The Task Team Guidelines suggested an external evaluation aspect to the process, but did not state exactly what the external evaluators had to do. The School evaluation panels, therefore, interpreted these suggestions in a variety of ways.

Theme a. Constitution and tasks of the panel

Regarding the *constitution* of the external evaluation panels, participants indicated that they approached both subject specialist and ODL experts to serve as external evaluators. In one case a colleague from a Pretoria based university was requested to act as external evaluator. It was indicated earlier on that one internal evaluation panel, after deciding on the merit of the submission decided to "put the portfolio out" to an external evaluator. Finding an ODL specialist, it was mentioned earlier, was a major challenge in this process of constituting the external evaluation panel. One participant reflected on the evaluation process in the following way: "When you have a panel of

experts and you can trust your external evaluator, one can feel assured that the candidate had a thorough hearing and was given due attention”.

When it comes to the *tasks* that these evaluators did, the following points were briefly mentioned:

- In one case the external evaluator was expected to rank the criteria.
- In another case “the external evaluator did not comment on the criteria; she simply used the criteria because that was our request to use this criteria”. A positive outcome in this case was that the external evaluator ended up using the Unisa submission as benchmark for her own module. The evaluator finally wrote a report on her findings.

The idea of an external subject specialist was welcomed since “then you are not only comparing it against criteria for ODL, which I think is already covered in the internal process, but you also benchmark it against what is happening at other universities ...”. It was felt that the external evaluation process benefited both parties; therefore: “The process itself, the internal process and then an external process; I think that is the way to go”.

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| Theme b. Challenges in the process |
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The *difficulties* regarding external evaluators have been alluded to under the previous category. They can be reiterated upon briefly in the following points:

- The difficulty in finding an ODL expert to act as external evaluator.
- Arrangements pertaining to the honorarium (financial reward) for external evaluators.
- The logistics involved in getting the portfolio to and from the external evaluators.

It seems from the analysis that there was little consistency in what external evaluators did in these separate instances. It was mentioned above that the interviews conducted for this study did not go beyond the internal evaluators and therefore did not include the external evaluators as well. One realises at this point that more information may be needed on what the external evaluators did exactly and how they interpreted their brief.

4.4.3.3 Category 3: Evaluators' views on the Excellence in Tuition Awards

Theme a. Reflection on the Awards in general and the 2005 Awards in particular

Although this category is not directly related to the evaluation process, it is important to discuss and report on the way that the three internal panelists viewed the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* at Unisa. They were not directly asked to comment on the Awards. However, they made it part of the discussion and I therefore include it in the report and regard it as research results that may inform the research questions.

The *Excellence in Tuition Awards* were regarded as being “long over due” and there was no “qualms about the principle of awarding tuition”. “I can really just again point to the principle that it is a sound principle. Whether it is a practical matter I have my serious doubts”. It has become clear from the discussion so far that ambivalent feelings existed regarding the Awards. The tension between theory and practice is one way of putting the problem.

One of the practical matters that were discussed was the low participation rate of staff in the Awards during 2005. A number of reasons were given for this state of affairs:

- The design and development of a teaching portfolio for the Awards takes an enormous amount of time and effort.
- The criteria set out in the guidelines are vague and complex and therefore difficult to comply with.
- The amount of evidence that is required to accomplish the portfolio is enormous.
- Awarding the prize to one person in the light of the emphasis on the team approach to ODL course design is extremely problematic.
- Unisa offers limited scope to lecturers to excel in their teaching, since “aspects of good teaching are constrained by budgetary limits or the teaching module itself”.

This corresponds in many ways with what was found in the previous phase amongst lecturers who submitted for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. Participants who acted as evaluators had some suggestions on how to address these challenges.

Although this paints a rather bleak picture for the future success of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* at Unisa the majority of these issues may be resolved through discussion and debate to ensure that the process does not suffer a slow death. One participant indicated that the success of the Awards starts with an atmosphere within which people discuss matters of tuition and where there is constant dialogue in the department; “it has to be imbibed in the department culture that there is such a thing [as the Awards - CIR]”. Consciousness of the Awards must “be part of the department’s working ambience”, part of the “departmental imagination”. The Awards should not be a compulsion but form “part of what one does as a member of department in one’s professional capacity”. It is up to each department to create and nurture this context first, “then it [the Awards – CIR] can happen”.

This was closely linked to the issue of the announcement of the Awards. Without this “working ambience” and “departmental imagination” a single announcement by the Chair of Department, whether in person or, most probably, via electronic mail will not succeed in getting lecturers involved in the Awards process. Preceding the Awards with a culture or context may be “a way to ameliorate some of the fears and tensions associated with the whole process.” This reminds one of an idea that featured in another phase of the Awards process, namely that the Awards should not be seen in isolation but form part of a larger debate on matters of tuition, also on departmental level.

The idea of possibly creating a policy statement on the Awards was also raised as a possible way forward. It was viewed that a “brief and pertinent” policy could capture the most important aspects of the Awards. The danger with a policy, however, is the over-saturation and over-determining of the issue which may lead to new sorts of tensions and conflicts. Therefore, the policy needs to contain “very, very brief, pertinent guidelines about the remuneration and process”.

One further aspect that was touched upon during one of the interviews was what one participant termed the “frequency rule” of the Awards. It was suggested that the current frequency of the Awards be revised to accommodate the schedule system of the University. Since modules are revised every three years it would be preferable to report on one’s module for the Awards after such an intensive revision process. Other

possibilities of frequenting the Awards are (a) to have bi-annual awards or (b) to rotate the awards between Colleges or even between younger and more senior lecturing staff.

4.4.4 Summary

An analysis of this third phase revealed once more that the Awards process can never attempt to force academics into a strict and inflexible format. Individuals differ and so do departments within Unisa and this fact need to be taken seriously in the Awards process. The way in which the guidelines on the constitution and tasks of the internal evaluation panels were interpreted highlights this fact. A number of practices and challenges pertaining to the evaluation process were discussed, together with suggestions on the way forward to ensure a smoother *Awards process*.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter contains the findings of the empirical investigation. It highlighted the findings in each of the three phases of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. Categories of findings were identified pertaining to each of these phases. Themes were further identified for each of these categories with the aim of highlighting pertinent issues in each category. The findings include what participants experienced during each of these phases of the Awards process. Weaknesses as well as strengths of the process had been highlighted. Suggestions about how to improve the process in future also feature strongly.

For the sake of overview the following table presents the research findings in terms of the identified categories and themes covered in each of the phases of the Awards process:

Table 1

| PHASE | CATEGORIES | THEMES |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Phase One</p> <p>Planning Phase</p> | <p>Category 1</p> <p>Planning forms an important part of the Awards process</p> <p>Category 2</p> <p>The Senate Task Team stands at the centre of the process</p> <p>Category 3</p> <p>The Excellence in Tuition Awards should not be seen in isolation</p> | <p>Theme a: Planning starts with top management structures</p> <p>Theme b: Evaluate previous Awards experiences before planning for a next round</p> <p>Theme a: There is need for people to drive the process</p> <p>Theme b: There should be more depth in the Task Team</p> <p>Theme a: There is need for a broader debate on tuition</p> <p>Theme b: Unisa structures need to support the Awards process</p> |
| <p>Phase Two</p> <p>Submission of Teaching Portfolios Phase</p> | <p>Category 1</p> <p>Communicating information regarding the Excellence in Tuition Awards</p> <p>Category 2</p> <p>Compiling the teaching portfolio</p> <p>Category 3</p> <p>Participants' reflection on the Excellence in Tuition Awards</p> | <p>Theme a: The availability of information</p> <p>Theme b: The role of management structures in sharing information</p> <p>Theme c: Getting assistance</p> <p>Theme a: Assessment criteria</p> <p>Theme b: Gathering evidence</p> <p>Theme c: Issues of time</p> <p>Theme a: Personal circumstances of lecturers who submitted</p> <p>Theme b: Reporting on one's teaching efforts</p> <p>Theme c: The value of having tuition awards</p> |
| <p>Phase Three</p> <p>Evaluation Phase</p> | <p>Category 1</p> <p>The internal evaluation process</p> <p>Category 2</p> <p>The external evaluation process</p> <p>Category 3</p> <p>Evaluators' views on the Excellence in Tuition Awards</p> | <p>Theme a: Constitution and tasks of the panel</p> <p>Theme b: Challenges in the process</p> <p>Theme a: Constitution and tasks of the panel</p> <p>Theme b: Challenges in the process</p> <p>Theme a: Reflection on the Awards in general and the 2005 Awards in particular</p> <p>Theme b: Views on the way forward</p> |

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the conclusions, recommendations and limitations of this research. The conclusions serve as an attempt to answer the main research questions, namely:

- What were the strengths and weaknesses of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process?
- How did those who participated in the process think it might be improved?

The overall aim of the study is to evaluate the process of awarding excellence in tuition at Unisa. The process followed during 2005 has been the focus of this investigation. The recommendations will, firstly, highlight a number of suggestions on how to improve the process and, secondly, recommend further research in this regard. Reflections on the shortcomings of the study will conclude this chapter.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions from the literature study as well as from the empirical investigation are provided. Significant themes were revealed and discussed in detail. The 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process is evaluated in terms of three main conclusions and their sub-themes. The main conclusions are the following:

- The Awards process is a chain of interrelated sub-processes and activities.
- The 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process experienced successes and challenges.
- The *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process at Unisa can be improved in a variety of ways.

A detailed discussion of each of these main conclusions and their sub-themes will follow.

5.2.1 The Awards process as a chain of interrelated sub-processes and activities

This first conclusion and its sub-themes may be presented graphically in the following way:

| |
|--|
| CONCLUSION: The Awards process is a chain of interrelated sub-processes and activities |
| SUB-THEMES: a. The Awards process needs guidance from a process owner. b. The Awards process needs clear communication channels. c. The Awards process needs to be flexible. d. The Awards process needs structures that can support the process. |

Discussion

It has become clear from the literature study that a process is a set of activities across time which has a beginning and an end with inputs and outputs (see section 2.4.1). The activities between the input and the output are interrelated and interdependent. This is not different with the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process. The three phases of the process (see section 1.5) clearly constitute sub-processes and this research showed how interdependent and interrelated these three phases are. It became evident from the discussion on the findings of the interviews how these three phases shed light and provide different perspectives on the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process, from the planning, through the submission to the evaluation phase. A number of sub-themes emanate from this fact and therefore need to be explored.

5.2.1.1 *The Awards process needs guidance from a process owner*

It became evident from the literature review (see sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.3) that management support is crucial to the success of any process within an organisation. It is consequently the task of the process owner to oversee the entire process, overview the process in terms of the entire organisation and instil a supplier-customer culture in order to improve the effectiveness of the process. Brits (2005:1034-1035) supports the view that total quality management as business approach is a customer-centred system. The Balzarova et al (2004) model for process management serves as a handy tool in this

regard. It can be stated that it is the task of the process owner to allow sufficient time for evolution of change to happen in the organisation, he/she/it (“it” in the case of a committee as process owner) should further facilitate communication amongst participants of the process, map and integrate the workflow, measure performance, deal with resistance to change, motivate teamwork and initiate training.

This is especially relevant to the 2005 Awards process. The empirical findings revealed that the majority of the participants (who in this case fulfil the role of customers) did not know who the process owner of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* at Unisa was (see sections 4.2.3.1 and 4.3.3.1 for examples). Some guessed that it ought to be the Vice Principal: Tuition, while other participants assigned the duty of process owner to the Senate Tuition Committee. One participant felt strongly that there should be process “drivers” or “champions” on College level (see section 4.2.3.2). It was further discovered through the empirical investigation that the Senate Task Team acted more or less as the owner of the Awards process (see section 4.2.3.2; more on this issue in section 5.2.2).

5.2.1.2 *The Awards process needs clear communication channels*

Closely related to the previous point is the issue of communication. A significant amount of participants linked the lack of knowing where the locus of control of the Awards process was (in the form of a process owner) with the poor flow of communication concerning the Awards. It is clear from section 4.3.3.1 that some participants considered existing communication channels to be highly effective, while others had problems to access information pertaining to the 2005 Awards.

The literature review indicated that a lack of communication undermines motivation and involvement in any process. This seems to have been, according to the empirical findings (see section 4.3.3.1), specifically relevant to the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. Since information pertaining to the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* included submission dates, information on the format of the portfolio, the assessment criteria and the constitution of the internal and external evaluation panels, it became difficult for academics to be enthused by the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* (and fit it into their busy schedules) if information of the Awards were not communicated timeously. It seemed not to have been a matter of information not being produced (all the abovementioned information was contained in the Senate Task Team’s *Guidelines to Colleges on the Excellence in Tuition Awards 2005*, see Appendix 2), but rather a matter of creating effective channels through which to communicate the information.

5.2.1.3 *The Awards process needs to be flexible*

The literature review indicated a shift in current management styles, namely from a hierarchical and authoritarian type of management style to a people-centred one (see section 2.4.1). A more holistic view of the enterprise, as opposed to a narrow departmentalised perspective, has been the result of this type of thinking (see section 2.4.2). This paradigmatic shift in thinking about organisations has consequences for the flow of processes in an organisation, namely the end of authoritarian rules and the dawn of more flexible and innovative approaches.

It became evident from the empirical findings (see sections 4.3.3.2 and 4.3.3.3) that Unisa lecturers see themselves as creative individuals who prefer not to be subjected to inflexible rules and procedures, but prefer interpreting broad guidelines and working “with what they have”. It is further important to emphasise the diverse circumstances of Unisa academics, as highlighted in the research findings (see section 4.3.3.3). A variety of positions (for example, Head of Department), responsibilities (for example, marking of semester examination scripts and writing tutorial letters), departmental context (for example, lack of visionary leadership or inter-staff tensions) and personal circumstances (for example, illness or leave) form the backdrop of lecturers’ work and this needs to be taken seriously. Only a very flexible Awards process will be able to accommodate this vast array of contexts.

5.2.1.4 *The Awards process needs structures that can support the process*

The literature review indicated that a process culture in an organisation is supported by resources (see section 2.4.2). These resources are embedded in the “soft” or human factors highlighted by the process driven organisation. Thus, instead of seeing structures as rigid and limiting, structures are rather understood in terms of people.

The empirical findings support this notion and therefore “structures” are seen as Heads of Departments, Directors of Schools and chairpersons of committees (see section 4.3.3.1). It lies within the responsibilities of these role players in the Awards process to link sub-processes and activities by organising the process around results and outcomes, linking parallel activities, putting the point of decision where the work is performed, capturing information once and at the source and providing a human point of contact (see section 2.4.2).

The following conclusion highlights some of the successes and challenges experienced during the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process.

5.2.2 Successes and challenges of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process

The second conclusion and its sub-themes may be presented graphically in the following way:

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|--|
| CONCLUSION: The 2005 <i>Excellence in Tuition Awards</i> process experienced successes and challenges |
| SUB-THEMES: a. The Senate Task Team fulfilled a crucial role in the process. b. The Unisa Awards is well aligned with existing excellence in tuition awards. c. Uncertainty was a major challenge to the success of the process. d. The 2005 Awards process was isolated from other teaching processes. |

Discussion

This second conclusion deals with the successes and challenges of the 2005 Awards process as highlighted by the literature review and the empirical findings. It was stated in section 1.3 that after the initial experience of the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* during 2004, a serious attempt was made by some stakeholders in the process to improve on that first experience. This should be acknowledged and appreciation expressed towards those visionaries within Unisa who, although intuitively and with limited scientific investigation, were willing to develop and refine the Awards process. However, a number of challenges to a truly successful 2005 Awards process need to be highlighted. Both the successes and challenges will now follow.

5.2.2.1 *The Senate Task Team fulfilled a crucial role in the process*

The issue of a process owner was discussed above. It became evident from the empirical findings that the Senate Task Team was instructed to realise and implement the 2005 Awards process (see section 4.2.3.2). It was therefore felt that it was at this

level that the process had to be “driven” (with “drivers” or “champions” taking the lead). It was this task team that, according to the empirical evidence, drew up the guidelines for departments, represented academic units and took the decisions back to their constituencies for comments and suggestions. It might even be said that this task team became the process owner to a large extent. This may have caused one of the main shortcomings of the Senate Task Team, according to the empirical findings (see section 4.2.3.2), namely that it fulfilled merely a functionary role in the process in stead of being a “power house” for quality, by debating issues relating to tuition excellence. Because of this, some participants felt, the task team lacked depth.

However, the enormous contribution made by the Senate Task Team to the 2005 Awards process cannot be underestimated. Whether it should fulfil the role of process owner is open for debate.

5.2.2.2 *The Unisa Awards is well aligned with existing excellence in tuition awards*

The literature review included a number of international tuition excellence awards (see section 2.2). We conclude from this that the 2005 Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* is well aligned with these international awards.

The aim of the Unisa Awards, namely to award excellent teaching in the same way in which excellent research is rewarded, is closely aligned with what these other awards aim to do. This also applies to the name of the Unisa Awards, namely the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*, which clearly indicates the purpose thereof. The *Guidelines to Colleges on the Excellence in Tuition Awards 2005* clearly states who may participate and who may receive the prize money. This point on participation may be expanded a bit more (as per example of the international awards) (see section 5.3 on Recommendations).

One important aspect of the Unisa 2005 Awards is the assessment criteria that compare favourably to those used in other contexts. The literature study (see 2.3.4 and 2.3.6) highlighted the drive towards formulating criteria for evaluating teaching in higher education and discussed some pertinent examples of criteria from a number of criteria sets. This can be regarded as one of the major successes of the 2005 Awards process, namely the issue (and choice) of criteria (see section 4.2.3.3).

Lastly, on the issue of monetary reward, the Unisa Awards is also on par with other institutions. It is not always possible to compare monetary value across national

borders. Yet, in terms of the currency value of the South African Rand, R30 000 seems to be of significance for winners of this award. This fact has been communicated to me in private discussions with previous winners of the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. It could still be debated whether the money should not be used for research and teaching development purposes only.

5.2.2.3 *Uncertainty was a major challenge to the success of the process*

This may be regarded as one of the negative themes revealed by the research. According to the empirical findings (see sections 4.2.3.1 and 4.3.3.1) this is closely related to two sub-themes discussed earlier, namely (a) the need for a process owner at top management level and (b) the lack of sharing of information in a number of instances throughout the process. It was mentioned in section 5.2.1.2 above that communication or sharing of information leads to motivation. The opposite is also true, namely that a lack of communication results in lack or deterioration of interest and consequently uncertainty. One of the recurring themes in the empirical findings based on the interviews (see sections 4.2.2, 4.3.2 and 4.4.2) was that of uncertainty: about where the information on the Awards is coming from, about what to do next, where to go with the portfolio, how to interpret the criteria, who to contact if a problem arises, *et cetera*. It therefore is clear that uncertainty may undermine the entire process and hamper its success.

5.2.2.4 *The 2005 Awards process was isolated from other teaching processes*

The literature review on the current demand for teaching excellence (see section 2.3) indicated that teaching evaluation is part of a bigger drive for quality in higher education. The discussion of existing criteria, standards and indicators for good teaching practice (see section 2.3.6) confirmed this notion. It is therefore concluded in this study that the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* remains too isolated from other initiatives on teaching within Unisa, such as efforts to rearticulate courses and programmes locally (within Unisa), and what has been happening nationally (policies pertaining directly to higher education). The empirical findings confirm this (see section 4.2.3.3) with participants reflecting on the need for the Awards to form part of a broader debate on tuition.

The following section suggests some ways of improving the Awards process. This is based on both the literature review and the empirical findings.

5.2.3 Improvement of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process at Unisa

The third conclusion and its sub-themes may be represented graphically in the following way:

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|--|
| CONCLUSION: The <i>Excellence in Tuition Awards</i> process at Unisa can be improved in a variety of ways. |
| SUB-THEMES: a. The Awards process needs to follow a more integrated approach. b. The Awards process needs to be more process-based. c. The Awards process implies training of academics. d. The Awards process demands consultation with academics. |

Discussion

Since it is one of the aims of this study to determine how participants think the 2005 Awards process could be improved, this issue needs closer discussion and a number of sub-themes may be discussed here.

5.2.3.1 *The Awards process needs to follow a more integrated approach*

It has become evident from the discussion so far that the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* should not be seen in isolation but that it should be integrated in a variety of ways. Firstly, it should integrate the different sub-processes that form part of the entire process. This refers to the separate phases of the Awards process as discussed in this study. There should therefore be a clearly defined structure for action, as indicated by the literature review (see section 2.4.1), and this structure should clearly indicate the interrelatedness of the process. It is therefore concluded that the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards*, could have been more successful in terms of integrating the different sub-processes, namely the planning phase, the submission of portfolios phase and the evaluation phase. It could also have integrated current debates on tuition and especially tuition transformation into the Awards process.

5.2.3.2 *The Awards process needs to be more process-based*

This point is an extension of the previous one and reiterates the first conclusion above (see section 5.2.1). A more process-based *Excellence in Tuition Awards* will therefore have a process owner, have clear communication channels and will be flexible enough to be successful in an academic environment. The literature review highlighted more aspects of a process-based undertaking by adding issues of promotion of a culture of supplier and customer as well as teamwork (see section 2.4.2). All of these aspects of a process-based Award seem to be important in the Unisa context.

5.2.3.3 *The Awards process implies training of academics*

Balzarova's model (Balzarova, Bamber, Mc Cambridge & Sharp 2004) of process management (see section 2.4.3) emphasises the role of training and learning by doing. The empirical findings concur with this notion of training (see section 4.3.3.1) and highlight the value of the training session on how to compile a portfolio by the Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development (ICLD). This did not only fulfil the function of information sharing, but also served as training session on how to go about compiling a teaching portfolio. Those academics who were present at the discussion regarded it as a worthwhile experience and something they needed to get started on their portfolios.

5.2.3.4 *The Awards process demands consultation with academics*

A fourth sub-theme of this conclusion is that of consultation with academics on issues pertaining to the Awards. It has been alluded to above (see section 5.2.2.1) that the Senate Task Team was representative of academic units (mostly Colleges) throughout the University. These representatives therefore took all decisions made by the task team back to Schools and teaching Departments for inputs and comments. This constituted one level of consultation. There was, according to the empirical findings, also other forms of consultation needed to successfully execute the Awards. Section 4.2.3.3 suggests consultations with all of those currently involved in tuition and especially those in the process of transformation of learning programmes, as well as academic planners, strategists and lecturers. Consultation is further also needed on the level of the individual lecturer who plans to submit for this award (see section 4.3.3). Issues pertaining to time (due date for submission of portfolios), assessment criteria for the portfolios and evidence to be included as part of the portfolio, were raised during the

interviews as challenges to lecturers and academics would have preferred to be more directly consulted on these issues (see section 4.3.3.2).

5.2.4 Summary

Three conclusions and their sub-themes have been discussed as conclusions to this investigation. It has become clear from the discussion that the literature review, together with the research findings, emphasise some pertinent results of this study, namely (a) that the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* is an interrelated process, (b) that the 2005 experience had its successes and challenges and (c) that there are a number of ways to improve the effectiveness of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*.

The following section focuses on the recommendations, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the investigation.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the above conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

5.3.1 Recommendations for improving the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process at Unisa

- Identify a process owner who can facilitate communication between participants of the process, map and integrate the workflow, measure performance, deal with resistance to change, encourage teamwork and initiate training. It is suggested that the Vice Principal: Tuition should fulfil the role of *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process owner. The empirical findings have shown that academics look up to this position and therefore regard the Vice Principal: Tuition as the ultimate driver of matters concerned with tuition.
- Formulate procedures and guidelines for the Awards process in such a way that lecturers feel free to interpret them within their unique contexts and circumstances. Treat lecturers as customers within a management system that is supportive, concerned about people and culture, that harnesses leadership, recognises excellent teaching practices and that is aimed at continuous improvement and development.

- Build upon the successes of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process. The application of appropriate assessment criteria for an open and distance learning environment seems to have been one of the major successes of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. More consultation with lecturers on the choice of criteria and more training to meet national and international demands on teaching should be seriously considered. Continuation of the teaching portfolio is also recommended, since it has become an internationally accepted form of assessment and evaluation of teaching. Empirical findings have revealed that those who submitted their portfolios for the Awards found it an enriching experience (see section 4.3.3.3).

- Expand the role and function of the Senate Task Team in order for it to become a platform for debate and discussion on matters of tuition. College representatives who are members of the task team need to play a more visible role as champions for tuition throughout the University.

- Integrate the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* into mainstream teaching within the University. This implies, for instance, that rearticulation efforts within the merged institution, the “new Unisa”, should be done in such a way that Awards criteria are taken seriously, that evidence is collected to form part of a teaching portfolio and that modules/majors that are fundamentally revised be submitted for the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* within a year or two after revision. A further way of integrating the Awards into mainstream teaching at Unisa would be to use the Awards process as context for University-wide debate on matters of excellence in teaching at an open and distance learning institution. A third way of possible integration is to promote research on matters of teaching by motivating excellent teachers to embark on research projects (for example, for Research and Development Leave; national and international conference papers) that relate directly to their teaching. Findings and results of these projects may be used as evidence within a teaching portfolio to be submitted for the *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. Excellence in teaching could, fourthly, be regarded as additional criterion for selection of new staff and promotion of current staff. This practice may start to alleviate the tension between teaching and research, as highlighted by both the literature study and the empirical findings (see sections 2.3.2 and 4.3.3.3).

5.3.2 Recommendations for further research

Recommendations for further research are:

- (1) An investigation into criteria for excellent teaching in a merged higher education institution for open and distance learning, such as Unisa, from the teaching staff's perspective. It is suggested that such an investigation should focus on what lecturers think are appropriate criteria for excellent teaching in such an environment. These criteria would focus on individual teaching practices and not on institutional issues pertaining to teaching (such as structures and policies). Research of this kind could inform the debate on criteria, as highlighted in section 2.3.6 of this study.
- (2) Still with the issue of criteria, it is suggested that an investigation be done among private higher education institutions that use distance teaching to determine what their lecturers regard as appropriate criteria for quality teaching in their environment. This may build upon the research of Cele (2005:596-610) into norms and standards for private higher education institutions. A comparative study (private *versus* public ODL institutions) may combine recommendations (1) and (2).
- (3) I would further recommend that research be done into the viability of Business Process Management for institutions of higher learning and possible ways this type of management may add value to quality assurance systems within universities. This may build upon the work of Brits (2005:1033-1046) on Total Quality Management in higher education institutions.
- (4) The issue of having a policy for the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* was raised by some of the participants. It is therefore recommended that this study be used as basis for future deliberations on the Awards that would result in such a policy. It is further recommended that the results of this investigation be taken seriously in the planning of future *Excellence in Tuition Awards* at Unisa.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

The limitations or shortcomings of this study are as follows:

Firstly, this study was conducted as a case study of Unisa's *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process for the year 2005. A selected group of people who participated in that process were included in the sample. Findings are therefore limited in terms of

- place (Unisa), and
- time (2005).

This fact severely compromises the generalisability of the study in terms of other institutions of higher learning and even other open and distance learning higher institutions. However, the results of this investigation may be useful in the planning for future Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards*. This fact, therefore, speaks directly to the problem that led to this investigation (see section 1.3), namely the lack of rigorous questioning of what was done at Unisa regarding the rewarding of excellent teaching since the start of the *Excellence in Tuition Awards* in 2004.

Secondly, the fact that only lecturers who participated in the Awards process formed part of the sample, and not also other lecturers (perhaps those who wanted to participate in the Awards process), could be a limitation of this study. The dedication and motivation of those who submitted their portfolios for the Awards may have (positively) influenced their view of the process (although research findings show severe criticisms of the process), while others who did not participate may have supplied a different perspective on the Awards process. Yet, it was important for this study to interview those lecturers who underwent the entire process of submitting teaching portfolios. An "insider" view of the process was more important than one built on hear-say.

Thirdly, the views and experiences of external evaluators may also have been included in the study. A richer view of the evaluation phase may have resulted if two or three external evaluators had been included in the sample. Although the internal evaluators caused some of the frustrations and influenced the views of external evaluators, the personal "voices" of these role players in the 2005 Awards process may have added more depth to the discussion of that phase.

5.5 SUMMARY

As expected (see for example section 5.2.2), the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process had a number of shortcomings that future Awards processes need to avoid. The following pertinent shortcomings need to be avoided in future:

- the lack of clear guidance from top management
- uncertainty due to a lack of communication and in some cases an unsupportive environment
- awarding excellent teaching in isolation of other mainstream teaching initiatives and reforms.

Surprisingly, the investigation also revealed that the 2005 Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process included a number of strengths that future processes can build upon, namely:

- the formulation of assessment criteria that are relevant for an ODL environment
- the use of a portfolio of evidence as assessment tool
- internal and external evaluators to ensure quality of submissions
- “training” of academics to compile teaching portfolios
- planning of the process through a task team.

This chapter concludes this research. It provided a report on the conclusions from the literature review and the empirical findings which attempted to answer the research questions, namely (a) what were the strengths and weaknesses of the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process and (b) how did those who participated in the process think it might be improved? This forms part of the overall aim of the study, namely to evaluate the 2005 process of awarding excellence in tuition at Unisa. It further provided recommendations on how to improve on the Unisa *Excellence in Tuition Awards* process as well as suggested some future research possibilities in this regard. Finally, the chapter concluded with some of the limitations of this study.

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REPORT
EXCELLENCE IN TUITION AWARDS - 2004
(COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES, UNISA)

Compiled by Dr Chris le Roux (member of the Task Team and coordinator of the evaluation process), on behalf of the College Tuition, Curriculum Development and Assessment Committee.

Edited by Ms Alexa Barnby (Editorial Department, Unisa).

October 2004

1. BACKGROUND TO EXCELLENCE IN TUITION AWARD

The idea of a Tuiton Output Award[®] was put before Unisa=s Tuition Committee during a meeting held on Thursday, 25 October 2001. Professor JNJ Kritzinger, then Dean of the former Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, tabled the idea on behalf of the Tuition Committee of that faculty.

The suggestion was that colleagues who produce high quality study guides should be rewarded for their efforts, in the same way that they are rewarded for excellent articles published in accredited journals[®].

It seems important to summarise the reasons for and the proposed process envisaged in Prof Kritzinger=s document and subsequent documents for the sake of determining to what extent the process in the College of Human Sciences corresponds with the original idea(s). It is further of historical interest to document this unique development in the history of the University of South Africa.

1.1 Reasons for suggesting the Award

Prof Kritzinger formulated the reason for such an award as follows:

... academics are presently not rewarded for the research, design or execution of the study guides they write, at a time when Unisa=s credibility as a distance teaching provider is under scrutiny. By rewarding only research outputs we are not encouraging excellence in tuition as we ought to be doing.

An additional reason that emerges from the document is that winners could include the achievement of this award in their *curriculum vitae*, increasing their chances for internal promotion or when the lecturer applies for a post at another university[®].

1.2 The initial process suggested for the Award

Prof Kritzinger suggested the following process:

- § a system of peer review (internal and external)
- § submission of study guides written in a particular year
- § a system of grading in which a number of criteria are used to consider the excellence and effectiveness of the study material
- § >A= category gradings receive an award paid from a fund set aside in the annual budget
- § the amount awarded should be the same as that of a research output subsidy
- § it should be decided whether each Faculty gets a number of awards ... or whether all the study guides produced in the university get evaluated centrally, under the guidance of the Tuition Executive, and only a fixed number of awards get made annually at Unisa@.

1.3 Outcome and decisions of the Tuition Committee meeting of 25 October 2001

It was resolved during that meeting of the Tuition Committee that:

- § the introduction of a Tuition Output Award be accepted in principle
- § a subcommittee be constituted to discuss the way forward and to submit recommendations to the Tuition Committee; this subcommittee would consist of Proff JNJ Kritzinger (convenor), HC Ngambi, DM van Ede, GJ Summers, NCG Vakalisa, MK Havenga, Dr D Veldsman, Me A Venter, Me AT Ngegebule (or representative) and a representative of JEPA.

2. THE STORY OF THE AWARD UNFOLDS

2.1 At its meeting held on **22 February 2002**, the Unisa Tuition Committee resolved that

- § Prof JNJ Kritzinger continue to act as convenor of the subcommittee
- § Ms FA Snyman also be included in the subcommittee

2.2 In a letter by Prof Kritzinger to Prof CF Swanepoel (dated **24 February 2003**), Prof Kritzinger stated that A[T]he committee (read >subcommittee= - CLR) met once during 2002, but did not progress substantially with the matter ...@ Prof Kritzinger apologised for not being able to continue to act as convenor due to the fact that he was no longer part of his Faculty=s tuition committee, and therefore did not have the Aorganisational infrastructure@ to arrange the meetings. In this letter he suggests that Dr Madge Karecki be co-opted as a member of the subcommittee (since she had been the one to suggest the idea of such an award in the first place).

Prof Kritzinger attached the minutes of the one meeting the subcommittee had held during 2002 (23 July) to the abovementioned letter. The purpose of the meeting was Ato generate an agenda for the next full meeting@. The agenda items drawn up during that meeting and suggestions on each of these (in brackets), serves as valuable information on the unfolding of the Award process. The following items and suggestions were minuted:

- (1) Rationale for award (recognition as well as improving the quality of tutorial material)
- (2) Should award be given per Faculty or University-wide (per Faculty - number to be decided)
- (3) Should award be monetary or in the form of a certificate (monetary - amount to be divided amongst team according to set criteria)
- (4) Should submission be voluntary (by application) (voluntary)
- (5) Evaluation (the following procedure should be followed:
 - a) submitted to Faculty Tuition Committee for sifting
 - b) peer evaluation in Faculty
 - c) through Faculty Executive to outside evaluator (SAIDE)
 - d) to vice-Principal Tuition)
- (6) Criteria for final evaluation (SAIDE will compile criteria and BLD should draw up internal criteria for academic authors)

2.3 Prof TS Maluleke (who succeeded Prof Kritzingner as Dean) suggested, in a letter to Prof CF Swanepoel (dated **25 February 2003**), that this sub-committee be re-activated or reconstituted so that it may proceed with its work, with a view of making recommendations to the Senate Tuition Committee on this matter@.

2.4 At its meeting held on **3 March 2003**, the Unisa Tuition Committee resolved that:

- (1) the subcommittee is requested to continue with its work and to submit recommendations to the next meeting of the Tuition Committee
- (2) Prof A van Aswegen be appointed to the subcommittee in the place of Prof MK Havenga
- (3) Prof HRM Moeketsi be appointed to the subcommittee in the place of Prof D van Ede
- (4) Prof HC Ngambi be appointed as chairperson of the subcommittee
- (5) Dr MM Karecki be appointed to the subcommittee in the place of Prof JNJ Kritzingner
- (6) Prof TA Mofokeng be invited to its next meeting

2.5 Prof Ngambi, as the new chairperson, then addressed a letter (dated **15 May 2003**) to all Deans, Deputy Deans, the Vice Principal Tuition and the Executive Director: Tuition stating that "At a meeting held on 12 May 2003 the Task Team decided to request the input of Faculty Tuition Committees on the proposal as formulated in the first paragraph above and on the identified issues listed in the previous paragraph (referring to the agenda of the Task Team dated 23 July 2002, see above - CLR). Input is also requested on whether an award in the form envisaged (i.e. for the excellence in the design and development of study material) would be adequate. Any alternative proposals or suggestions would be welcome. Could you please refer this request for input to your faculty Tuition Committee@"

2.6 At the meeting of the Unisa Tuition Committee held on **20 June 2003** it was noted that the subcommittee is continuing with its work and that faculties would submit recommendations and proposals to such subcommittee for consideration@.

2.7 In a letter to Prof CF Swanepoel, dated **12 September 2003**, Prof Ngambi requests that the task team's report on the Tuition Excellence Award be discussed at the following Tuition Committee meeting to be held on 18 September 2003. The report (attached to this report as **ADDENDUM 1**) addressed the following issues:

- § a rationale and name for the award
- § a suggestion that it be given per faculty
- § that it be a monetary award
- § that submissions be voluntary and consist of a study package per submission
- § suggestions on the evaluation procedures to be followed
- § a clear set of evaluation criteria

2.8 The abovementioned report of the Task Team was tabled at the **18 September 2003** meeting of the Unisa Tuition Committee. It was resolved that the criteria as submitted be accepted with minor amendments, of which the most important one is to include an additional academic from the Faculty concerned and an external evaluator on the evaluation panel. The Task Team was further requested by the meeting to

- § update the document, taking into account the weighting
- § reconsider the team award versus an individual award
- § consider how faculty committees will adjudicate the study material.

Three other decisions of that meeting that impacted directly on the Award process were:

- § that student participation be an integral part of the process
- § that an annual award be set at R25 000 and that the award be presented at the graduation ceremony after the first semester of 2004
- § that the Task Team finalise the draft document on the Tuition Excellence Award, in consultation with Prof CF Swanepoel and Prof L Molamu, for referral to the Executive Committee of Senate.

3. THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES (later renamed *College of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education* and then *College of Human Sciences*) TAKES UP THE CHALLENGE

3.1 During a meeting of the Tuition Committee of the former *Faculty of Humanities*, held on **2 June 2003**, the chairperson, Prof RMH Moeketsi, introduced the subject and asked for suggestions with regard to the recognition of teaching excellence. This was done in reaction to Prof Ngambi's letter of 15 May 2003 (see above).

The following suggestions were minuted:

- § a distinction be made between kinds of teaching excellence:
 - (a) a commitment by a lecturer to deliver student friendly and pedagogically sound study material
 - (b) study material that embodies the result of original research
- § Chancellor's prizes be awarded for both kinds of teaching
- § the two kinds of teaching excellence can be linked (generally, but not exclusively) to undergraduate and postgraduate teaching respectively.

Prof Fourie reiterated the existing dualism between teaching and research imposed by the subsidy formula.

3.2 The Tuition Committee of the College of Human Sciences was constituted on 11 March 2004 for the 'pre-interim phase'. The committee should further on be called the **Tuition, Curriculum Development and Assessment Committee**

(**CTC**, College Tuition Committee, for short) so that due emphasis is laid on the salient aspects of the teaching and learning process.

At its first meeting on **26 March 2004** the CTC revived the matter of the Excellence in Tuition Award and a Task Team was selected to pursue the issue in terms of the Report of the Unisa Tuition Committee Task Team (see **ADDENDUM 1**) and the deadline set for presenting the Award (Spring graduation ceremony 2004, see above).

Members of the original Task Team were: Prof C Moore (chair), Prof M de Jongh, Ms B Zawada, Prof F de Beer (Anthropology), Dr V Rapmund and Dr AR Johnson. While some members stepped down, others were added to the Task Team due to the merger of the former Faculty of Education and the former Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies with the former Faculty of Humanities to form the present *College of Human Sciences*. The final Task Team consisted of Prof C Moore (chair), Prof O Mashile, Prof F de Beer, Prof L Swanepoel, Dr C le Roux, Dr D Veldsman, Me B Zawada.

3.3 At the second meeting held on **26 April 2004** the Task Team for the Award tabled a detailed report which specified a clear evaluation process. This report took the report of Prof Ngambi=s Task Team as starting point and included the following:

- § suggestions to the CTC on ways to contextualise and improve the process to suit the College of Human Sciences= environment (attached to this report as **ADDENDUM 2**)
- § evaluation criteria (attached to this report as **ADDENDUM 3**)
- § a detailed rating scale according to which the suggested criteria would be weighted (attached to this report as **ADDENDUM 4**)
- § time frames to meet the deadline of the 2004 Spring Graduation Ceremony (attached to this report as **ADDENDUM 5**)
- § a submission form, which aimed at formalising the submissions, was developed and presented to the Committee.

3.4 A very important issue that deserves special attention here is the proposal by the Task Team to deviate fundamentally from the original idea that a submission for the Award should consist of a study package only (which could consist of a study guide, prescribed books, a reader, tutorial letters, examination papers, media in the form of video, audio cassettes, etc). The Task Team=s proposal that all submissions should take the form of a **teaching portfolio** was accepted by the CTC. As is specified under **Additional Information** on the criteria document (see **ADDENDUM 3**), the portfolio should include not only the study package, but also a wide variety of evidence that the learning package is really >working= (including pass rates, feedback from learners on discussion classes, feedback from learners on how they evaluate the module/course, etc), together with evidence that the lecturer is involved in matters of tuition on a variety of levels in the university and that he/she is involved in personal development in the field of open and distance learning, adult learning or any other education related fields.

A literature review yielded valuable information on teaching portfolios. It was the research of Edgerton, Hutchings and Quinlan (1991) in particular that guided the process. According to these authors, teaching portfolios can be described as

- § providing documented evidence of teaching that is connected to the specifics and contexts of what is being taught

- § going beyond exclusive reliance on student ratings, because they include a range of evidence from a variety of sources such as syllabi, samples of student work, self-reflections, reports on classroom research and faculty development efforts
- § thinking hard about one=s teaching, a practice that is likely to lead to improvement in practice
- § addressing the question of what is effective teaching and what standards should drive teaching practice (this would influence a teacher=s decision on what to include in the portfolio)
- § a step toward a more public, professional view of teaching which reflects teaching as a scholarly activity.

Edgerton, Hutchings and Quinlan (1991) identify four domains that a portfolio of this nature might address:

- § **Course planning and preparation**
(represented by syllabi; handouts; lecture notes, etc. - in the **Unisa** environment readers; audio cassettes; video cassettes, etc.)
- § **Actual teaching presentation**
(represented by comments from observers; written comments from student evaluations - in the **Unisa** environment this could include the way study guides and other written study material are designed, e.g. outcomes-based, with dialogue and empathy for learners, interactive, encouraging learner involvement, online/web-based learning opportunities, learner-friendly layout, etc; discussion classes; peer review of one=s teaching efforts; workshops; learners= feedback on these face-to-face encounters; tutorials as part of the Student Support system; feedback from tutors and learners on the tutorials as well as the study material, etc.)
- § **Evaluation of learning**
(represented by types of assessment taking place - both formative and summative assessment - in the **Unisa** environment this could include activities in the text of the guide; feedback to these activities; compulsory and additional assignments; feedback to these assignments; examination papers; rating scales and assessment criteria, etc.)
- § **Currency in the field**
(represented by changes in the course as new developments arise; currency of reading materials prescribed or drawn on for course presentation; attendance of and presentations at professional conferences that reported on or resulted in changes in content or methods of teaching - in the **Unisa** environment this could include evidence Bureau for Learning Development (BLD) involvement in course design and development; a team approach to course development; compliance with Unisa policies on Tuition and Assessment; publication of articles in the Progressio and other education related journals; membership of education related societies, e.g. SAARDHE; attendance of workshops on tuition related matters; involvement in tuition committees on departmental, school and college levels; education related qualifications offered at Unisa, e.g. Postgraduate Diploma in Distance Education, Diploma in Student Support, Postgraduate Diploma in Tertiary Education, Certificate for Distance Education Practitioners, etc).

3.5 Subsequent meetings of the CTC were held on **28 May, 28 June, 29 July and 26 August 2004** during which the Excellence in Tuition Award Task Team reported on the progress of the process, specifically on the internal and external evaluation processes that were taking place during that time.

4. THE EVALUATION PROCESS, BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

4.1 Internal evaluation process

It is important to note that all academics received the evaluation criteria and the rating scales beforehand, to ensure a fair and transparent evaluation process.

The internal evaluation process is clearly set out in **ADDENDUM 2**, point 6. The Task Team supported the original guidelines, but added that

- § a sufficient number of academics be part of the panels per department, School or College
- § that academics with special interest in matters of tuition be included on the panels
- § that candidates whose submissions have been selected for School/College evaluation, designate someone from his/her discipline to act as member of the evaluation panel.

These guidelines were adhered to as far as possible. However, due to the limited time frame in which the process had to be completed some of the guidelines were overlooked. For example, after a submission was received by the Chair of Department, in some cases a panel (on departmental level) was constituted that did not include representatives from the BLD, Unisa Press or Editorial. This did not seem to matter too much during this first experience due to the fact that only seven submissions from six departments (Afrikaans en Algemene Literatuurwetenskap, Linguistics, Further Teacher Education, Psychology, Social Work and Missiology) were evaluated. All submissions were, after being evaluated to some or other extent, forwarded to the next level of evaluation, namely the School level.

At the School level a more rigorous evaluation process was followed. Since the Task Team suggested that the Award be given per School, four panels were constituted to deal with the submissions from the four Schools in the College of Human Sciences, viz.

- § **School of Languages** (Department of Linguistics, Departement Afrikaans en Algemene Literatuurwetenskap)
- § **School of Theology and Biblical Religion** (Department of Missiology)
- § **School of Applied Social Sciences** (Department of Psychology, Department of Social Work) and
- § **School of Education** (two submissions from the Department of Further Teacher Education).

The table further on in this report (included as **ADDENDUM 6**) indicates the way in which the evaluation panels were constituted. It is clear from the constitution of the panels that the guidelines of the Task Team were adhered to, viz. representatives of BLD, Unisa Press, Editorial, academics with interest in tuition matters and academics from the discipline.

The evaluation process consisted of the following procedures:

- § due to the limited time frame in which the evaluation had to be done to reach the deadline of the Spring graduation ceremony, each evaluator had 24 hours in which to evaluate the submission(s) allocated to him/her
- § each evaluator had to evaluate the submissions according to the criteria (see **ADDENDUM 3**) and fill in the rating scale document (see **ADDENDUM 4**), per submission, and come to a final percentage for each candidate; comments could also be filled in on the document; this process took two weeks
- § meetings were then held with each evaluation panel (per School) - over a period of two days - during which panel members shared their percentage per candidate; an average was calculated per candidate
- § members of the panel then had the opportunity to discuss each submission in relation to the criteria; these comments were noted
- § reports were written containing both the quantitative (average percentage) and qualitative (discussion) results; these reports were then forwarded to Prof RMH Moeketsi as chair person of the CTC; they also accompanied the submissions to the external evaluators.

4.2 External evaluation process

The Task Team recommended that A... the External Evaluator responsible for the final evaluation should be from outside UNISA, knowledgeable in terms of ODL, with international standing, for example someone from SAIDE or NADEOSA@ (see **ADDENDUM 2**, point 8).

NADEOSA (National Association for Distance Education Organisations of South Africa) was requested to act as coordinator of the external evaluation process (Ms Tessa Welch coordinated the process). The external evaluation panel consisted of three evaluators, viz. Tony Lelliot (University of the Witwatersrand), Tessa Welch (NADEOSA) and Christine Randell (SAIDE - South African Institute for Distance Education). It was suggested that the external panel

- § divide the seven submissions from four Schools amongst themselves (two people would evaluate two submissions from one School each, and one person would evaluate three submissions from two Schools)
- § not select a winner per School if the criteria were not sufficiently met
- § write complete reports on each submission stating clearly why a candidate is awarded/is not awarded the prize

After a period of six weeks the panel of external evaluators released their final reports. The following table contains a synopsis of the comments made by the three external evaluators. This may serve as additional to the existing criteria for good practices in tuition in an Open and Distance Learning environment (**ADDENDUM 3**).

| TOPIC/THEME/AREA OF TUITION | EXPLANATION/EXAMPLES/SUGGESTIONS |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Teaching and learning methods</p> | <p>These should be innovative and address the needs of learners directly, e.g. using audio cassettes as medium for teaching court interpreting or using a variety of texts in a literature module. Examples include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § utilise methods that gradually progress from a focus on teaching (prescriptive) to a focus on learning (self-directive and self-discovery) § get feedback from learners on the effectiveness of your teaching method(s) § ensure that the course design is suitable for the development of those competences (practical, theoretical or both) that the course aims to achieve (e.g. for a practical course, e.g. Social Work, build in compulsory workshops and community work; for a theoretical course e.g. Philosophy, build in opportunities for critical and analytical thinking) § use a single discipline-related theory approach for lower levels (NQF level 5) and proceed to a multi-theory approach for higher levels (NQF level 6+) § expose learners to as many authors= perspectives as possible (beware of prescribing textbooks written only by lecturers for that course/module) § design learning resources (guide, workbook, prescribed books, recommended reading, reader, additional tutorial letters, discussion classes, workshops, electronic media, etc) in such a way that they form a comprehensive, integrated and Complementary whole |
| <p>2. Throughput rate</p> | <p>A high level of success (pass rates) and throughput (keeping learners in the system) should be strived for. This is directly related to the acquisition of competences (knowledge, skills and values) as detailed in the course outcomes as well as the support offered. Lecturers should pursue ways of finding out what the pass rate is and when and why learners drop out of a module/course.</p> |

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 3. Learner support | <p>Learner support activities should be built into the learning experience, for example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">§ helping learners with study skills (like writing essays, answering MCQs) and linking this directly to the tasks that learners are expected to do§ building discipline-specific vocabulary§ supplying guidance on where and how to find additional information§ providing learners with critical thinking tools§ giving clear and concise instructions for activities and tasks§ introducing additional media if learners do not have the prescribed media (e.g. computers)§ arranging for complementary face-to-face support in the form of discussion classes and tutorials (explore decentralised methods of learner support)§ assist learners in forming peer support groups§ supply administrative support as far as possible§ get feedback (through questionnaires) on problems learners are experiencing |
|---------------------------|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>4. Assessment strategy</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § adhere to the principle of valid assessment (assessing what one sets out to assess) § supply feedback to exercises and activities directly after a task § implement a uniform system of assessment (avoid a myriad of different types of unrelated and confusing tasks, exercises/quicknesses/activities) § ensure authentic assessment (prevent learners from >jumping the gun= and relying on others to do their assessment tasks, e.g. assignments) § integrate theoretical understanding with practical know-how § incorporate and clearly describe the criteria for the various assessment tasks § design the assessment in such a way that learners know what to focus on § assessment should include a percentage of compulsory tasks and assignments - this serves to motivate learners and to get feedback to check their own progress § design self-assessment activities through which learners can practice their analytical and critical thinking skills, as well as their communication and writing skills § align the assessment tasks with the required NQF level descriptors |
| <p>5. The voice of the learner</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> § include learner=s own experience and understanding § regard these as valid departure points for discussion § utilise examples and scenarios that depict learners= experiences and life worlds § interview learners to get their points of view § encourage learners to identify discipline-related theory in their practice and workplace § positively reinforce the value of their experience § supply learners the space to behave as self-directed learners § contextualise learning material by including authentic material § design over time a reliable and comprehensive learner profile |

The external evaluators surprised the Task Team with their results in that they suggested two categories of award, namely a category for **Highly Commended Tuition** and a category for **Excellence in Tuition**. The final report and the announcement of the winners in each of these categories are attached as **ADDENDUM 7**.

The task team suggested that each member of the external evaluation team receive an honorarium of R460.00 per submission that they evaluated. The tariff which Unisa uses for the examination of a dissertation of limited scope was used as a guiding principle.

5. REFLECTING ON AND DEVELOPING THE PROCESS

It is important to note that a **Participation Action Research** approach was followed throughout the process. This was necessary due to this being the first experience of the Task Team and the CTC in handling such a matter. Results from this approach served not only to improve the process as it >happened=, but will also serve to inform future processes.

Kemmis and McTaggard (1990) define Participatory Action Research as

a form of collective self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social and educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out.

These authors see the process as a spiral of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and believe that

the approach is only action research when it is collaborative, though it is important to realise that the action research of the group is achieved through critically examined action of individual group members.

The group/participants involved in the action research regarding the Excellence in Tuition Award included the members of the CTC, the Task Team, members of the internal and external evaluation panels, as well as the candidates themselves. Addenda 2, 3, 4 and 6 give evidence of the reflection on and development of the process by the Task Team and the external evaluators.

What follows is a description of the reflection on the process by some of the internal evaluators and some of the candidates. All internal evaluators and candidates were requested to reflect on the processes of evaluation and submission, respectively, by using a **metaphor**. **Metaphorical thinking** elicits creative, divergent, qualitative data and therefore offers us the opportunity to invent new ways of seeing things, of expressing ourselves and of approaching problems. It should be noted that not all evaluators or candidates reacted to this request.

| Metaphorical thinking by internal evaluators | |
|--|---|
| Metaphor | Application to the evaluation process |
| An art lover or critic | Closely studying works of art; letting them “speak to me and I commented accordingly. The key strand in this analogy would be respect and even admiration for the creative work of >tuition artists”. |

| | |
|--|---|
| | |
| The next four metaphors are from the experience of one evaluator: | |
| Around the world in eighty days and Phileas Fogg=s happy ending in making the deadline. | This metaphor highlights the limited time given for the evaluation process. |
| Danny Kaye acting the part of Hans Christian Anderson and singing to a caterpillar while a chorus of school children chant multiplication tables in the background. The worm applies its scientific standards with accuracy, but they are not the only way of looking at the flower, or perhaps not the most useful. | Frustration with the fact that it is left to the discretion of the evaluator to give meaning to the terms in the rating scale and the criteria documents, such as Poor, Moderate, Good, Outstanding, local and international context, etc. Connected with the previous metaphor, the evaluation process becomes somewhat foggy. |
| A Hoping to look through a window, but seeing only a distorted image of myself, through a glass, darkly@. Like Yeats, A>I shudder and I sigh to think that even Cicero and many-minded Homer were mad as the mist and the snow= - but they persevered, added value to life, and we must all try to do likewise@ | Trying to make sense of a cluttered and murky process. Numbers are necessary in evaluation, A numbers can be meaningful reflections of relationships - between various aspects of a candidate=s own competences, and between different candidates. But they are also of necessity partial.@ |
| A man washing his hands. A I can almost hear him saying >What is truth?=-; but I can=t see him through the fog@. | |
| The process of assaying - A the carefully calibrated testing of metals, etc. for quality, in order to determine their properties and composition@. | The metaphor conveys the impression of A patient, empirical, and detailed observation and scrutiny, supported by <i>respect</i> for the material itself: the rich veins of possibly precious mineral running in hidden channels in the ore. Moreover, the metallurgical trope expresses something of the spirit and nature of the enterprise: informed judgement based on first-hand experience; the diverse elements; the activity of discriminating between one kind of property/quality and another@. |
| Kangaroo court | In a kangaroo court, A the accused (in this case the evaluators) are called in for questioning and often there are >witnesses@ (in this case people called in to stand in for the interests of the submissions) who hurl all sorts of accusations at the accused. After much untrue and unsubstantiated accusations - which are not questioned by any rational process - judgement is made based not on whether 'justice' was accomplished but on all the untested witness stories - and I should add ... stories@. |

| | |
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| | |
| A hiking trail | The criteria are one=s map and backpack and with it one embarks on a hiking trail through the module (submission). One not only concentrates on the set route (the Study Guides) but also on the scenery (the total picture) which adds to or subtracts from the hiking trail. One also checks whether the g(G)uide is reliable, accurate, and whether it adds to the pleasures of the journey or adds to the confusion of getting lost. |
| Competition | AI felt uncomfortable to sit in judgement of one of my colleague=s work. I was aware that there are too many factors at play that would and could influence the result. We are dealing with an aspect of a person=s work and it could appear very good >on paper= but what actually happens in practice is something quite different. People play games and some are better at it than others@. |
| People trampling on something of value | Some evaluators do not realise what some candidates are trying to accomplish. It would be difficult to submit a colleague=s work in future due to the envy of some evaluators. |
| A train and a train journey | The study material reminds one of a train and a train journey, with the contents being the engine in front providing guidance and the students, lecturers, etc being the different coaches and the passengers on a journey to a previously unvisited destination. AWe, the evaluators, could observe this train and report on its effectivity. The evaluation process also comprised different aspects (and people) that were interlinked - another train, another interesting journey@. The metaphor illustrates that the process comprised different sections that together form a unit. AI found the different inputs of panel members very interesting - each could contribute something that no one else thought of@. |

| Metaphorical thinking by candidates | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Metaphor | Application to the evaluation process |
| A winner | The candidate regards him/herself as a winner with regard to both the content and the facilitation of learning. The learner is also regarded as a winner being empowered to apply the knowledge and skills in her/his situation. ΔApplying for the Excellence in Tuition Award was seen as an opportunity to receive the >crown= for success@ |
| Procrustes Bed | ΔThe criteria clearly envisage a single module rather than a series of modules or a programme being submitted for recognition. Therefore not all criteria are always equally applicable or applicable in the ways in which they were intended. Sometime one needs to stretch interpretations a bit to make sense@. |
| Stuffing a pillow with duck down | ΔIt is not that easy to take hold of a handful of the fine down and finally get it placed in the pillow case and withdraw your hand to take hold of another handful of down. As you move your hand to withdraw it, down starts flying all over the place. So if you manage to position a handful of down, you pretty much leave it where it is, even though the placement isn=t perfect. Further disturbance may cause too much disruption. This process is repeated until the pillow seems stiff enough. Then you merely try to withdraw your hand with as little movement as possible and keep the opening as closed as possible, until you have finally succeeded in sewing the pillow up. But there is a further dimension. If you have raised the ducks yourself, you know where the down comes from. And if you have plucked the down yourself you appreciate the pain the ducks may have experienced for you to have the down you are now using to stuff the pillows@. |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>A mountain climb; pushing a wheel barrel; taking the next hurdle</p> | <p>ΔTo my relief compiling the necessary information turned out to be a smooth process because I had the information at hand and I was keeping a regular record of learners= comments, but it nevertheless takes time ... The metaphors that I named above were not really what I experienced. I gathered the material quickly and I got help of our department secretary ... and the support of my HoD ... So my experience was of a gatherer of a harvest of materials ... I was just trying to do it in the most effective and attractive way possible ... This whole process has enabled me to revisit the work I=ve done and develop my own philosophy of education@.</p> |
|---|--|

6. LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE PROCESS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Although not exhaustive, the following points may serve as lessons learnt from the process:

6.1 Positive lessons

- § Awarding academics for excellence in tuition stimulates teaching and serves as motivation for dedication and hard work.
- § It supplies lecturers with an opportunity to reflect upon their teaching philosophy and practices and highlights ways to develop and improve on existing ideas and methods.
- § It contributes to the professionalism of the teaching part of a lecturer=s job.
- § It conscientises lecturers with regard to the University=s policies on matters of tuition.
- § It highlights international best practices and benchmarks.
- § It serves as an opportunity for lecturers to bring their teaching practices under the attention of external bodies, organisations and individuals.
- § It emphasises the effectiveness of the team approach to course design and development.

6.2 Negative lessons

- § A rushed process compromises the quality of both the submissions and the evaluation of these submissions.
- § Insensitive evaluators cause feelings of despair and aversion amongst colleagues.
- § Criteria and rating scales that are too generic/too limited do not cater for diverse submissions.
- § >Office politics= and power plays may lead to envy amongst candidates and departments.
- § Inexperience in ways of compiling a Teaching Portfolio leads to incomplete submissions.
- § Implementing a Tuition Award without thorough debate and academic discourse on the purpose and nature of such a phenomenon leads to apathy and distrust.

§ An isolated process for the Award in one College, without knowledge of what other Colleges are doing in this regard, dilutes the honour which accompanies the Award, due to an uneven process throughout the University.

6.3 Way forward

It is suggested that

- § the Excellence in Tuition Award be continued to become part of the culture of the comprehensive Unisa (all Colleges)
- § a consistent process be negotiated between Colleges to ensure that the playing fields are levelled for all candidates to participate equally
- § evaluators be trained in the principles and practice of criterion-referenced assessment/evaluation
- § different categories of submissions be identified (e.g. course/programme *versus* module; individual *versus* team submissions)
- § awarding according to School be continued
- § candidates be given the opportunity (on both Department evaluation and School evaluation levels) to >defend= their submissions before the evaluation panels
- § the current evaluation criteria be streamlined
- § notification of the awards process reaches academics way in advance of the due dates to allow for enough time for designing of submissions
- § submissions are in the form of a teaching portfolio
- § guidelines be formulated on the weighting of different aspects of a submission (e.g. what is the weight of the design and development of the course *vis-à-vis* the Tuition repertoire@ of the lecturer?)
- § evaluators be impartial (not having been involved in the design, development or teaching of a submitted course/module)
- § a task team per College develops, coordinates and facilitates the process for that College, but communicates developments with task teams from all other Colleges
- § peer evaluation (internal and external, and probably international) and learner evaluation of study material and teaching efforts form part of each submission, as well as evidence of evaluation by industry (where applicable)
- § winner portfolios be exhibited.

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Edgerton, R., Huthings, P. & Quinlan, K. 1991. *The Teaching Portfolio: capturing the scholarship in teaching.* Washington, DC: The American Association for Higher Education.

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APPENDIX 2

GUIDELINES TO COLLEGES ON THE EXCELLENCE IN TUITION AWARDS 2005

1. General guidelines

- 1.1 The Excellence in Tuition Awards follows an **integrated approach**, that is, it focuses not only on study packages, but on the entire teaching process and practice.
- 1.2 Teaching staff are expected to submit a **portfolio of evidence** which indicates the processes, procedures and practices of teaching a specific module or programme. The portfolio should clearly and convincingly indicate ways in which a substantial amount of the criteria (see further on) for best ODL practices have been met. The portfolio should include reflections on, as well as evidence and examples of good teaching practices that comply with these criteria. The format and style of the portfolio is left to the imagination and creativity of the individual/team.

The onus, therefore, rests on the candidate to

- supply evidence/proof of teaching practices that reflects efforts to comply with the criteria set out below (see the checklist below as a guide to what constitutes “evidence”)
 - motivate his/her actions or non-actions regarding teaching, e.g. stating clearly what is done, within which context and with what institutional constraints/recourses in mind
 - include in the portfolio evidence of reflective practice, e.g. possibilities already thought of that could possibly improve existing study material and/or develop one’s teaching competencies
 - supply reasons why he/she thinks the submission is of special significance to be awarded the Excellence in Tuition Award.
- 1.3 Only **teaching staff** involved in the teaching of the submitted module/programme may receive the prize money.
- 1.4 A person/team cannot submit the identical module/programme if that module/programme has **already received** any of the Excellence in Tuition Awards during the last three years.
- 1.5 A submission could cover a teaching cycle of **three years** (thus, for the 2005 awards evidence of the last three years – 2002, 2003, 2004 - of teaching that module/program may be included in the portfolio).
- 1.6 The Excellence in Tuition Awards (**one per School**) will be conferred at the Academic Opening Ceremony during January 2006.

2. Composition of the Internal and External evaluation panels

- 2.1 The *first level* of evaluation is on **School** level. Individuals or teams from teaching departments (formal modules and programmes only) submit their portfolios to the team of **internal** evaluators, which consists of the following persons:
- Chair of School Tuition Committee (chair and convenor of the panel)
 - One representative from each of the departments in that School

- One member of the ICLD (Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development – former BLD)

Schools are at liberty to formulate the composition of their own internal evaluation panel. However, following the above guidelines is recommended for the sake of consistency.

School evaluation panels identify suitable candidates for the second level of evaluation. A brief report and/or recommendation should accompany each of these suitable submissions.

- 2.2** The *second level* of evaluation is by an **external** evaluation panel, which will preferably include an ODL expert as well as a subject specialist. Members of the external evaluation panel may evaluate the submissions jointly or individually.

These external evaluators need to receive the same set of criteria with which the submissions were internally evaluated (see further on).

Example: The School of Social Sciences internal panel selects two finalists (say from four submissions), one from the Department of Health Studies and one from the Department of Sociology. The ODL expert may evaluate both. A subject specialist needs, however, to be selected for each of these disciplines.

The School evaluation panel has the responsibility to select suitable people to act as external evaluators.

The external panels' decisions and/or recommendations on the winning submissions will be final.

The reports and recommendations of the external evaluators will be submitted to the Chair of the College Tuition Committee.

The Chair of the College Tuition Committee oversees the process of both internal and external evaluation processes and ensures consistency throughout the process. The Chair of the College Tuition Committee also acts as mediator/adjudicator in case of conflict.

3. Criteria for both Internal and External evaluation

The following **six criteria** are based on the NADEOSA Quality Criteria and Minimum Standards that directly relate to teaching and are meant to guide teaching staff in their submissions. The explanation of each criterion, together with examples of both acceptable and non-acceptable teaching practices pertaining to each criterion, are meant as a broad frame of reference within which a candidate can navigate in the preparation of his/her teaching portfolio.

It is acknowledged that there are differences between modules and programmes within and between disciplines. Therefore, flexibility in the interpretation and application of these criteria is permitted.

| Criterion | Explanation | Good practice | Unacceptable practice |
|---|--|---|---|
| 1. Learner profile | | | |
| <p>The module/ program designers used up to date information about learners, which informed the planning, design, development and evaluation of this program/ module</p> | <p>Learner profiles identify characteristics and situation of learners, e.g. demographics, language, motivation for learning, educational background, experience, special needs, resources, success rate</p> | <p>Program/module is designed with national, learner and employer needs in mind; market research was done; lecturers liaised with industry and professions; ongoing research is conducted into learners' needs</p> | <p>Program/module does not attempt to quantify the learning elements (notional hours to be spent on learning, assessment, contact sessions); content mastering exceeds 12 - 15 hours per week (entire learning time) that distance learner can manage; course is either overloaded or does not merit the credits awarded (according to notional hours: 1 credit =10 notional learning hours); culturally insensitive and biased</p> |
| 2. Curriculum design | | | |
| <p>The course curriculum is well-researched</p> | <p>The curriculum encourages access and is responsive to changing environments; assessment is appropriate to the purpose and outcomes of the module/program; aims and outcomes are appropriate to the level of study; there exists a process of development and evaluation of the program/module; knowledge is presented, by means of the curriculum, as changing and debatable rather than as fixed and not to be questioned.</p> | <p>Elements of the course are well planned and integrated; choice of media and technology is justified; the amount of work merits credits allocated to program/module; local needs and contexts are taken into account; teaching strategies take learners' existing knowledge and prior experience seriously; experiential learning opportunities (work integrated learning) are taken into account; ICLD was involved in the curriculum planning process</p> | <p>Curriculum design is equated with determining course content only; developing course material is equated with writing course material; authors underestimate the lead time of 9 months to one year for materials planning and development (which includes planning, writing, critical reading, developmental testing, layout, editing, proofing and production); program/module does not reflect changes in the world in general (e.g. political, economic) and the field/discipline in particular</p> |

| 3. Content design | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <p>The content, assessment and teaching approaches support the aims and learning outcomes of the module/program</p> | <p>Materials are accessibly presented with access devices such as outcomes, headings, sub-headings included; study material teaches in coherent way which engages learners; course material is relevant for the target learners; the approach is learner friendly; language usage is appropriate to the level of learners; jargon is kept to a minimum; concept maps, pictures and diagrams cater for the 'visual' learner; text is broken up into reasonable chunks</p> <p>For web-based/online courses:</p> <p>speedy and reliable service; easy to connect; pages are attractive; easily navigable; clear links; seamless integration of elements; up to date; minimum technical faults; support built in</p> | <p>Content is up to date, relevant, free of discrimination, aware of multi-cultural reality of SA society; language level is appropriate to target; support is given to learn through reading at a distance; material offers a clear understanding of the requirements of the course; material is presented as an unfolding argument; elements and media are integrated; technical quality of material facilitates learning; encourages interaction between learners (collaborative learning); concepts are explained; a range of examples is included; knowledge is presented as open and knowledge is constructed in contexts; learners have the opportunity to interrogate what they learn; visual design is taken into account with the assistance of Unisa Press</p> | <p>Courses are used for long periods of time and not updated; reference list is outdated; little attempt is made to explain the different elements of the course; learners are not advised on how to approach the study material; aims and outcomes are confusing or absent; components of the course are contradictory or unrelated; knowledge is merely received in a fixed form from an authority; style alienates and patronises learners; educational media are merely add-ons to learning content</p> |

| 4. Assessment design | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Assessment is an essential feature of the teaching process</p> | <p>Assessment is recognised as key motivator of learning; assessment forms an integral part of the learning process; assessment information is provided (criteria, procedures, dates); there is a range of formative and summative tasks and methods; assessment is appropriate for the level of learning; assessment practices are valid and fair; integrated assessment techniques are used; assessment techniques recognise prior learning and experience of students; staff (permanent and contract) are competent and trained to assess at required level; external assessors are trained and experienced</p> | <p>Marking procedures are consistent throughout the module/program; provision is made for of helpful feedback; turnaround time of assignments facilitates learning; there is an appeal system in place; learners are given opportunities to gauge their progress through activities; reports from external moderators serve as judgement of the appropriateness of the course for the NQF level</p> | <p>Program/module does not provide for formative assessment; formative assessment does not contribute to the learner's final mark; assignments are not compulsory; module/program contains only self-assessment assignments; there is insufficient control of standards of tutors marking assignments; there is a lack of internal moderating; there is no standardised marking system; high pass rates occur due to the fact that learning and assessment demands are too low</p> |

| 5. Teaching-learning interaction and learner support | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Learners are provided with real 2-way communication opportunities (which include the use of various forms of technology, contact teaching, peer support, contact with lecturers)</p> | <p>Learners are encouraged to participate in communities of learning; learners are encouraged to explore a variety of sources and resources (e.g. Internet); tutors are well trained and selected; learners have opportunities for individual academic support (telephone, office visits, online); learners at risk are identified, monitored and supported</p> | <p>Learners are orientated about the method of teaching and learning (both print and electronic); careful selection of times, dates and venues for discussion classes is made to accommodate learners' circumstances academic is informed and helpful to give advice (e.g. career path); contact sessions or tutorials are taking place and used to interact with learners; lecturers can be consulted outside of office hours (via cell phone)</p> | <p>For online course: insufficient technical infrastructure to facilitate the delivery; no learner feedback on course delivery For print based courses: no learner feedback on course delivery; support is not a recognised element of the curriculum; there is a lack of integration of support (learner support is merely an add-on); no contact sessions are held or they are merely used as exam preparation sessions, with little or no interaction between lecturers and learners</p> |
| 6. Quality assurance | | | |
| <p>There is sufficient evidence of an integrated framework that informs a clear cycle of planning, implementing, monitoring, reflection, evaluation and action to ensure successful teaching and learning</p> | <p>Internal quality assurance processes are in place; ongoing efforts exist to improve quality of learning and teaching; formal monitoring processes are in place to ensure the viability and relevance of your material</p> | <p>Mechanisms are in place to monitor learner participation and performance (both print and online learning); throughput and retention rates are available and being monitored and analysed</p> | <p>There is a lack of mechanisms to determine the amount of learners actively participating; data is collected but never analysed and acted upon; there is little monitoring of tutors, contract workers, members of course team in terms of successful and effective teaching; lecturers never submit progress reports or self-reflective reports</p> |

The following checklist may serve as guide for what to include in one's teaching portfolio in terms of evidence:

As evidence of Learner Profile (Criterion 1)

- Information from the Bureau for Market Research or any other internal department that supplies information on the profile of your learners
- Number of learners per module/programme under discussion
- Efforts (individual or departmental) to gain information of who your learners are

As evidence of Curriculum Design (Criterion 2) and Content Design (Criterion 3)

- Textbook (if applicable)
- Study guide(s)
- Tutorial letters
- Audio cassettes (if applicable)
- Video material (if applicable)
- CD ROMs (if applicable)
- Workbook
- Any other element of the study package that is of relevance to the submission

As evidence of Assessment Design (Criterion 4)

- Copies of marked assignments (semester 1)
- Examination papers (semester 1)
- Memorandum of examinations

As evidence of Teaching-learning Interaction and Learner Support (Criterion 5)

- Examples of correspondence with students
- Letters to students (all, if less than 20)
- E-mails (all if less than 20)
- Examples of letter of praise / commendations from students
- Lecturer assessment by students, e.g. during discussion classes

4. Timeframes for the Excellence in Tuition Awards 2005

End March

Final documentation and guidelines to Departments.

From 1 March to end of June

Submissions are prepared by candidates.

Submissions are made to School evaluation panels in terms of the guidelines provided.

From 1 July to end of August

School evaluation panel selects and motivates submissions for evaluation by the external evaluator panels.

Send suitable submissions to external panels.

From 1 September to end of October

Feedback from the external evaluation panels to the College Tuition. Committee for the identification of the winners per School.

Beginning of November

Winners of the Excellence in Tuition Awards per School/College announced by UNISA.

January 2006

The Excellence in Tuition Awards are conferred (per School) at the Opening Ceremony of the University.

APPENDIX 3

EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW FROM PHASE ONE (PLANNING PHASE) HELD ON 31 MAY 2005

INTERVIEWEE: (name of participant), good afternoon. You have been part of the process for the Tuition Awards in 2005. For investigation and research purposes I call this **Phase One** - the laying down of the ground rules for the 2005 *Excellence in Tuition Awards*.

The aim of this investigation of mine, is to research the process involved in the Tuition Awards in 2005 at Unisa - the process only - and therefore there are mainly two questions that will be coming up this afternoon in our interview.

Firstly, what did you find to be effective in the process so far. Secondly, what did you find to be not so effective or ineffective in the process so far and how can we improve on it for the next round. The discussion may develop beyond these issues, but these are two main issues that I would like to focus on for my research.

Firstly, your views on the effectiveness of the process - the First Phase - so far.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay, let's see. It depends what you regard as the process. But if we look at planning and preparation for submission of portfolios, then the process starts at the Senate Tuition Committee meeting or meetings where decisions have to be made, Colleges informed and so on and so on, at the strategic level and if we start there then the process for 2005 begins with interrogating what happened in 2004.

And, as you will know, 2004 was handled sort of haphazardly. We were lucky in our College because we did not stop thinking about this thing. That is why the (name of College) was sort of ahead of everybody else. That, as far as I am concerned, the fact that we did it as much as we did it hastily and sort of haphazardly, it was a

necessary learning experience for the process of 2005 to be based on. I don't know whether 2005 would have happened had we not, as a College, done 2004 the way we did it.

So, at the beginning of this year that Senate Tuition Committee came up with several recommendations to re-institute - one of the first things was to re-institute – the initial Task Team that proposed these Awards to start with. And that Task Team depended heavily on the experience of the College and then new guidelines were developed. And based on that experience that the College had, the guidelines were, sort of, simplified, shortened, made more user-friendly, and all sorts of things. And for me that's progress; we may not be there yet. The experience in 2005 is going to tell how far we have advanced in improving the situation.

And then from there, Colleges had to comment on the proposed Guidelines – and I am happy to say that those guidelines had been adopted. I am not quite sure whether the Senate Tuition Committee announced to the University that the Guidelines have been adopted and that the business ????? or that the process has began for 2005. I am not sure about that. What I know is that we have done it in our College and we have circulated the things. People have already started to work ahead. Personally, I have heard from would-be participants who have been asking questions and so on. So I know to an extent a few people who are already working on preparing their portfolios.

INTERVIEWER: May I interrupt you, please. So, what I hear from you is the effectiveness is the fact that we can base this year's experience on a previous experience; how haphazard and how faulty it may have been?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, that was a very important learning experience. And we knew when we did it last year that it is going to be full of mistakes and so on, because there was no proper preparation.

I tell you what I think about this whole thing - what I am going to say now may be irrelevant to your questions. But it is pertinent. There was no preparation for excellence in tuition.

INTERVIEWER: In 2004?

INTERVIEWEE: In the university thinking. There was no preparation at all. Had there been preparation, people would have known right at the onset to write their study material in a particular way.

So, this thing came as an after-thought, not that it is useless, not that it came late, and so on. But, it came mainly as an after-thought when study materials were already there, when practice was already there. So to assess this kind of practice without having had these guidelines – hmm, it is not necessarily unfair but things could have been ...

INTERVIEWER: It complicates the whole issue?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it makes it a little difficult. But henceforth, obviously, things will improve because people will know that the university does attach importance on tuition and it's willing to support in the same way as research is supported.

INTERVIEWER: I also hear from you, that something that could become a barrier in the success is the fact that it was announced by top management that we are now in the process and this is now in flight.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Why, would you say, did that happened?

INTERVIEWEE: You know what let me rather put it this way that I have not heard any announcement to the university that the competition has started. Like, you know, when you do athletics the gun that says: Go for it! You see; I did not hear that and I don't know how much

emphasis the other Colleges or directors or tuition people place on this exercise.

I am not even sure that it should be an internal thing. I don't think it should be a thing taken care of internally. I think there should be word from above which says: Go for it. And then implementation happens on the count. So I am not quite sure what's happening elsewhere and I remember what happened last year. Nobody said it; we happened to remember and we actually sensitized even top management - I still remember at that Tuition Committee meeting where we presented our College Tuition Committee minutes and we had this item and people were asking: What is this you are talking about? - kind of thing.

But we'll get there. I am not quite sure where Mgambi (chair person of Seante Task Team who was promoted - CIR) is as far as this process is concerned because she has moved on to another level which takes her away from her own College and from these things. So I am not sure whether we still have a champion.

INTERVIEWER: You are talking about a champion or a driver. Who would you think should drive the university-wide effort?

INTERVIEWEE: I think it should be driven from the Vice-Principal: Tuition's office. Him, the academic planners and those people at top decision-making positions. I think that is where the buck ultimately stops. Especially because the budget, I think, that covers this whole exercise it's the Vice Principal's.

If you chooses to delegate the function to the Task Team, it is something else. At least there will be somebody responsible to him to drive this whole exercise.

INTERVIEWER: Let's come back to the process so far in the Task Team. We had a couple of meetings, not everybody always attended. The first one was well attended, after that it petered out a little bit. What is your view on that?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't have a problem with people who do not attend meetings. I'll tell you why; this is a very critical time for the university. There are meetings here and there and everywhere and I know people are over-stretched - this is genuine from my heart. Whatever the reason is people don't attend meetings, I understand well in advance, because I can't cope with all the things I am suppose to do. I mean I was here until Saturday night.

Until we know what the reasons are why people don't attend, I will always think it is because of the heavy loads on their tables – number one.

Number two, some of these issues need a kind of passion over and above duty. **(Lots of noise from the outside)**. Sometimes you go to a meeting where these things are discussed and you are just not interested in them. So why go back? Especially if it is a Task Team that has to write a report, the lifespan of which is short-lived, and so on. So it could be that some of the people who found themselves as member of ???? are not interested in the topic - that's fine.

What matters for me is that there are key people who are interested. There are people who believe in this thing, who should drive it for the benefit of the university; at the end it's their university that it going to benefit from this whole thing - they may not realize it as yet, but with time we will be able to produce these study material that is required at those levels ...; the kind of thing that the university can boast about, that's all - are going to come out of exercises such as this, and I hope at that stage the university will realize the essence, the importance of this. Ahm ...

INTERVIEWER: While you are thinking, may I prompt you a little bit in a direction, if I may. What do you think about the process making more room and space for debate within the Task Team, within this Phase One, for instance on the criteria? Did we had enough room, enough

time, enough passion to debate these issues, or did it go a little bit fast?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. I'll tell you what I did by way of trying to address the point that you are raising. When the new guidelines were developed this year, just before they were adopted, and they were sent to Colleges for comments, I immediately thought of widening the debate by targeting the people who participated in the competition last year, because I thought these are the people who were more in touch with the guidelines than anybody else in this University.

And I wrote to them in particular saying, I know this thing has been sent to the university community, but I want you to use the experience you had last year, to make comments on this.

I think if we do have the opportunity, there should be broader discussions and debates and so on. But if there's no opportunity for such broader debates and discussions, you as a researcher could make it your business.- if I had time I would make it my business - to follow this process and conduct a longitudinal study. Maybe over 5 years or something like that. And see what kind of study material is produced at the end of this period that you shall have identified. And see how many participants, because the number of participants tells me the amount of readiness in the University. The fewer participants we get, it means the University is not ready to boast about its study material. We will see what's going to come out this year. I am not necessarily optimistic, but it's good for the process to continue because the more the competition goes on, the more sensitized the University gets.

So it would be interesting to conduct this study so that we see, at the end of whatever period of time, whether we get more entries, whether the quality is better, those kinds of things and so on. That will sort of counteract or address the concern that you have about discussions and so on, and so on.

This time is not necessarily the best of times to do these detailed issues, because it feels like a rebirth of the University and there are more critical, more pertinent things, more visible - I don't know, something like that, things to be addressed, like policies and those kinds of things.

So this detailed things, maybe that is why they don't necessarily get the attention, but we will give them the attention, because of the interest we have in this and the passion that we are doing this with. The university will thank you after 10 years when you say, this is the study that I conducted from this time to that time and these are the findings and we will begin to say there are some improvement or something like that.

INTERVIEWER: What about the way forward? How do you think; you have implied a lot of suggestions and ways forward and ways to improve it. But if you could isolate one or two suggestions. How can we improve the effectiveness of this first phase?

INTERVIEWEE: I'll tell you what we could do – I am not quite sure what you mean by the First Phase – but this initial stage ...

INTERVIEWER: Yes?

INTERVIEWEE: ... needs a lot of - not support as such, but discussion in Departments, in School Tuition Committees and so on, and so on. I don't know. Whatever possible platform one gets to address this issue. For instance, one of the platforms is re-curriculation.

We should find a way of linking re-curriculation to producing study material that we stand this test. And knowing what the criteria are for this competition, we already know who the role players are and we start to involve those role players as much as possible in the production of study material. Academics may not be aware at the onset, how much they need the help of the ICLD (Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development – CIR), for instance and ...

INTERVIEWER: Editorial?

INTERVIEWEE: ... those kinds of things. So we who tend to have this knowledge must impress upon departments that study material has to be produced this way and so on. We could even have a document, we could even work out a document that we send out freely, maybe under the guise of the Tuition Committee as a reminder. Something casual but which sort of directs people in the right direction. Something like that; instead of imposing ourselves on them.

We will be knowing what we are doing, we will be aiming at achieving this ultimate goal without necessarily treading on ... You know how sensitive people are when you come to suggest that you do things this way as this way and the other. So we'll come up with those suggestions. Very nicely and so on. And for that matter you could use the Tuition Committee because there is this (College – CIR) Task Team, the Task Team that is a standing item on the (College – CIR) Tuition (Committee – CIR) agenda. Come up with recommendations and the recommendations are adopted and sent out to the people as minutes or something like that. Somebody will read them or maybe the Dean adopts them and sends them out. Something like that. That will assist ... I mean, if you look at what happened last year when Professor Mofokeng was still Executive Director of Research – there were workshops, there were seminars, there were all sorts of things. I mean we were bombarded with this message that research skills have to be developed and so on. We can do that.

And maybe when we reach a certain point and we feel like inviting outside people with more knowledge and so on, which I think a workshop on this particular topic and so on, whoever is interested. But push the university in that particular direction. I am aware that we could be slow as an institution to move, but I am sure we can drive them; we can drive the University to get to that point.

INTERVIEWER: Maybe my last question. Do you think that the Tuition Awards is so important that it will justify a policy of its own one day? One day soon?

INTERVIEWEE: Policy. I don't ...

INTERVIEWER: ... which explains the process, which explains the financial reward, things ... - the rules and regulations of such an award?

INTERVIEWEE: I think that is overdue, as a matter of fact. In fact that is why I closed my eyes That's where we should have started.

There should have been something that allows for a budget that allows for those kinds of things. So I'm not sure, maybe top management has that kind of thing already, but we should check because that is where it should have started. It must be in the university books that the university is engaged in this kind of thing on an annual basis, at R25 (thousand – CIR) per School, and so.

I will be surprised if it is not in their books. But we could check whether there is policy ... *(cell phone ringing in the background)*

This is maybe what I am trying to say, that there has not been an announcement. Nobody seems to be talking about this thing, until we present them with issues and then all we get is response. For I mean for the other Colleges to do it last year, was a mere response to the fact that we had already started. You see? And with Mgambi out of the picture, sort of, I don't think there's a champion. You see?

INTERVIEWER: Professor, we have spent sufficient time to my mind. Is there anything else you would like to re-emphasize, re-visit?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah. I'll tell you what my wish is. My wish is that for the (College name), that we get at least one or two other people who are

resident in the College to work on this issue, from a College perspective.

To work with you as - I regard you as the expert - but then we need College academics to get on board. Two people, maybe, to form this Task Team and maybe that's what we need to do, seriously!

And I wish also that the other Colleges could have at least a driver for the College, somebody with ..., so that when we have this University (Senate – CIR) Task Team, the Task Team is made up of college experts and passionate people, and so on – sit 5 or 6 Chris le Roux's, you see, and maybe one or two other people, something like that. People who will do research in this field who ..., so that when we have this University-wide discussions, they don't come from Chris le Roux only, but they are University-wide in the true sense of the word.

Now I don't know how to get that kind of cooperation from the other Colleges. I mean, we don't lose sight of the fact that people are busy with more important things - but this is a baby that has recently been born which needs to be developed and so on. And I am convinced that in a few years' time the university is going to appreciate this effort. They may not see it as yet but when external bodies come in here to review our stuff and so on, a big percentage of our study material shall be done along these lines.

And I think that is ... - it's just a pity that in our College the structure is such that - I would have loved it if the College had a Tuition Portfolio, not conflated with the School of Languages Director and so on. Somebody who would just sit and focus on tuition matters. Because I think that person would have been able to say every School should do this. You see? Bring up your person, and so on. So that this Task Team we talk about is representative of the College and is serious business, where the College will invest resources and those kinds of things. Because sometimes these things don't necessarily happen unless there is support from above.

The only support we have now is a platform where you can give report and the R25 000. For me that's basically what is available for now but we need far more than that. We need drivers, we need people who believe in this thing and who have time to drive it. OK.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much Professor. With this we sign off. Thank you.

APPENDIX 4

EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW FROM PHASE TWO (SUBMISSION OF PORTFOLIOS PHASE) HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2005

INTERVIEWER: Hello (name of participant). You've been part of the process for the *Excellence in the Tuition Awards* for 2005 as lecturer who submitted a teaching portfolio. For investigation purposes we call this Phase Two, the submission by academics. Phase One was the ground work and the Planning Phase. Phase Three after this will be the Evaluation Phase. This is Phase Two, the submission by academics.

The aim of this investigation, as you may know, is to research the process of the Tuition Awards for 2005 in each of these phases. My two questions are the following:

Firstly, what did you find to be effective in the process, the process of submission and secondly, what did you find to be ineffective or not so effective and how can we improve on that. The discussion may go beyond these core issues, but these are the two issues that I am interested in. Over to you.

INTERVIEWEE: Hi Chris. I think it is easier to start with the second question, if I may?

INTERVIEWER: You may.

INTERVIEWEE: I did not know about the whole process, so, I think the first thing that I could think of in terms of improvement, is communication. I actually didn't know that there was something like Tuition Awards going on. So, when I heard about it was when you circulated an e-mail inviting people to a workshop where you presented information about compiling a portfolio. That is the first time that I heard about it. Can't recall the exact time, but I think it was late in April or early in May this year (2005 – CIR).

So I don't know who, where and when the communication goes out, sort of, informing people with the initial information. Okay, this is Tuition Award time, this is how the process will look like, these are the dates that you have to comply to, et cetera.

So, for me that is actually the only kind of thing that stands out that I could contribute in terms of a suggestion what to do.

INTERVIEWER: Who, do you suspect, should have this information; where do you expect it to come from?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, actually I suspect that this should come via the Faculties or what we call it these days, Schools and the Departments and so forth. I do not know who is the ..., who takes ownership of this Award. Is it the Vice:Principal Tuition? I don't know. And, whatever channels are used to transfer that kind of information through the Unisa system.

The Research Award I am aware of, because I sit on our College's Research Committee. So there these issues are discussed. Then you know about it. But the Tuition Award is not that known. The information about it is not known.

INTERVIEWER: So what you say it is the committee for tuition of your School's responsibility to do this. Do you have Schools, or is it just one College without Schools? Do you have schools in your College?

INTERVIEWEE: No, we have Schools now.

INTERVIEWER: Is there a Tuition Committee for every School?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think they should be the responsible body?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, they could have information about this and pass it on to whomever. So, ja, I think that's the main thing that stands out for me. I can't really think of something else to contribute, because what happened then is when I got the e-mail about your workshop, I thought, "Oh! this is interesting let me see what it is about". And then I decided to attend the workshop, not even knowing that, you know, this Tuition Award thing was going on.

So, I sat in that workshop that day listening to you and sort of thinking, "My goodness, I have been with Unisa almost 20 years now, I think I've done a lot of good stuff here in terms of tuition. So maybe I should think about this". And I walked away that day there, deciding that I am going to give it a go and see what I can end up with in a short span of time.

So, I actually think I could have spent a bit more time reflecting on this, but fortunately there was a long week-end before the submission date and I used that and fortunately I have kept some records of some of the actual new developments that I initiated in our Department. So, it was not that difficult to compile a couple of things, and put it together and shape it a little bit and get something in.

INTERVIEWER: On the bright side, is there anything that you can share with us in terms of something that helped you in the process to complete your work, to do it according to the criteria, according to the process. Anything that you can positively relate to.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, surely. That (ICLD – CIR) workshop definitely contributed. I also looked at one or two of the previous submissions, browsed briefly through it and then you helped me a lot – I think the book you recommended and now you should not ask me the name of the title. But it was a little bit on how to put the portfolio together and a couple of ideas in there, and a couple of criteria that came out of that. That was very helpful and that helped me to actually make progress quickly. So, that really helped.

INTERVIEWER: It is not really part of my investigation, but I am interested in your reflection on what the portfolio meant to you as a teacher. You say you have been at Unisa for a long time and you had the material and it was a good experience, I gather.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What did it do for you as person and as a teacher, as a lecturer?

INTERVIEWEE: I think one thing that stands out is that it actually made me think back. As I said I've been here for almost 20 years and what happens in the Department like ours, this is (name of Department), it's very research orientated. We have got the highest research output per permanent staff member, definitely in our Faculty or College, and one of the highest in the University. So, there is a lot of emphasis here on research and actually very little on tuition.

So.... I think I am pulling my weight as far as the research goes, but I've got a soft spot for the students, and I actually felt that there is very little, if any, recognition for efforts that go into the tuition side of our jobs. So, this allowed me the opportunity to sit back a little bit and think about what I have done here in the last 20 years. And what I have achieved on that side, but which is the sort of silent part of your job.

Because if you do research and you publish a couple of papers and you attended or presented a couple of conferences, that is sort of listed in the Annual Report, kind of, you know, here is the list of conferences, papers published, et cetera, et cetera.

Now, the tuition goes into that, you know, I'm teaching modules so and so and module that and that and a number of students is this and that and the number of tutorial letters that you've compiled so many and so forth, but it's as if that is sort of in the background somewhere. In the background noise.

INTERVIEWER: Just statistics?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, that's right and who cares about those kinds of statistics. And when it comes to promotion time and things like that, they never ask you in a selection committee meeting, you know, how many students you trained: first-year students, second-year students, et cetera, et cetera. They ask you in which international journals did you publish and are you, sort of, recognised by your peers in your research field. And I value the teaching side just as important.

So, I enjoyed actually the experience of digging up a couple of stuff especially in this one module that I have been involved with over a fairly large number of years.

INTERVIEWER: Would you be of the opinion that you could help other colleagues in the College or the School next year to also go through this process by sharing it with them in public. At a tuition committee meeting, at a departmental meeting?

Do you think there is room for someone like you have submitted to share it with the colleagues and to help them through their own process?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, sure I would not mind to do something like that. I always ... When you asked that I immediately think about, you know, how responsive people would be to that. That is an unknown factor here where I am (*little laugh*) operating.

So, there might be people who would be interested, I'm not sure to what extent, but yes, I will be willing to share that kind of learning experience with others.

INTERVIEWER: I am of the opinion that the process should not end here but that we should share it with others and that it be known that there is an award like this and what was the experience and what were the spin-offs, the positives, for a teacher like you. Would you agree with that?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, sure.

INTERVIEWER: Never let it die.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, once you've put in an effort like that it sounds good to sort of see that there comes a second, and a third and a fourth and whatever after that.

It also allows one, I think, to improve oneself when you start talking about these things. Similar to doing research, sharing, what you've done, with peers and with your students so that they can learn from it. There might even be some youngsters around who could benefit by hearing some of these things.

And I must say that some times academia is supposed to be open in the sense that we gather information, is doesn't matter via research or tuition or whatever, but that this should be shared and should be brought into the open. And I am not sure that we are good at that, sort of disposing information to especially younger colleagues, post-graduate students et cetera, et cetera, who might be interested in an academic career.

INTERVIEWER: What time of the year (participant name), would you think is the best time to start sharing about the Tuition Award; very early, January, or when?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know; it depends on what the sort of dead-line or the time lines are that is possible within the university system. I am not sure, probably too long before the time then people would forget about it. I am not sure where the balance would be. I would think that one needs probably three or four months to think about it and try to get it together and do it. So, I would think three or four months.

INTERVIEWER: That would take us to about the beginning of the academic year in January, if submissions would be in by end of June, which some people say it is very late and is a bad time of the year with the 101

tutorial letters, they would like it a month earlier. Then we should start thinking of including this in the process, the sharing, very early in the year - not later than February/March? Would you agree with that?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, June for us as well; end of May/June is a terribly busy time of the year. So it is difficult to do things then. And towards the end of the year it is exam time. So, ja, probably.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you, that was very informative and it helps my investigation a lot. Anything to wrap up with, any last comment, final word of wisdom?

INTERVIEWEE: Sjo, Chris, I should have thought about that beforehand. *(laughing)* I will send you an e-mail.

INTERVIEWER: Would you say that we have concluded our discussion?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I think so, we can continue again some other time.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much for your input. I really appreciate it.

APPENDIX 5

EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW FROM PHASE TWO (SUBMISSION OF PORTFOLIOS PHASE) HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2005

INTERVIEWER: Hello (name of participant). You've been part of the process for the Excellence in Tuition Awards for 2005 as a lecturer who submitted a teaching portfolio. For investigation purposes we call this Phase Two, which is the submission by academics phase. Thank you very much for being willing to be interviewed on this issue. The aim of this investigation is to research the process of the Tuition Awards, 2005, in each of the phases. I have two questions for you, please.

First, what did you find to be effective in the process. Secondly, what was not so effective in the process and how can we improve that. Our discussion may even go beyond these issues. So, let us start with what you found effective in the process of submitting for the Tuition Awards. Please.

INTERVIEWEE: Well, I have to preface it by saying that the award itself is a good thing. I was very happy to see that tuition has been recognised at last by this institution and I was happy to submit for it. Obviously, the setting up of the portfolio was very time consuming. It took ..., ja, I mean, well maybe that's one of the negative things. But it's a very important process, I think, to go through as a lecture, because it gives you a chance to consolidate all your thinking, put everything together in one file and it is like a feel-good factor, pat yourself on the back, get it all together, it looks good, you feel good. And writing that report, you know, as well as collecting all your little bits of evidence putting it one place. I wrote a five or six-page report, which was also a nice way of, yes, start articulating and consolidating all the things that I've been thinking about the course for some time, but perhaps that hadn't been put in one place.

INTERVIEWER: May I just ask on that, did you have enough information from the process, from the structures; did you know exactly what to include in the portfolio; was it clear enough?

INTERVIEWEE: When I first got the announcement about the portfolio, I think it was a letter from (names of Executive Dean of College and Chair of College Tuition Committee), I am not sure. And it said that there were some portfolio guidelines attached. In fact there were not, to that e-mail, and I had to chase around a little bit looking for exactly where those portfolio guidelines were. In fact, they'd been sent to the heads of Department and then ..., so, I had to personally go and request them. So that wasn't ideal that they - I think maybe 'Prof' had been away at the time, but anyway, it hadn't come filtering directly down and it certainly wasn't attached to this letter as it should have been.

Then when I eventually got the guidelines, I was very happy to see you that, yes, they were very nice and detailed; there were lots of suggestions that I would have not thought of putting in that were then spelt out, questions that you could ask yourself. I liked the fact that they were sort of organised for you into, I think, five or six different headings, which I then used as the headings in my own portfolio.

But at no point were they prescriptive guidelines, you know, they were just saying these are some of the things that you could include, but it was very much left up to the individual to make of it what he or she wanted, which I liked. I liked that freedom. There was no sense of 'this is an application form, apply, fill in this nice bureaucratic form', not at all. It was very much 'this is what we want, run with it and go for it'.

So, we were encouraged to be independent and this is another important point which I liked personally, it was very much bottom-up. It was up to you, if you felt that you had a chance, then you were like encouraged to go for it - without the support of your Head of Department, without the support of your departmental tuition committee. I didn't have to go through any of those structures, it was just you and seeing it off. And, see what happens.

INTERVIEWER: So, do you think that the process should be open-ended or should it be more closed in terms of structured, more prescriptive. Wouldn't there be other academics who would like a more prescriptive, kind of secure environment?

INTERVIEWEE: Ahm. I believe that those that are really inspired by tuition and, you know, feel that it's their role in life, are creative people anyway. I don't think any of us as academics like a prescriptive form to be thrown on us. And I think that would probably discourage participation even more. So, ja, I mean it's daunting to get a thing like that that is so open-ended, that requires so much work from academics, but, hell, you know, that's what we're here for.

INTERVIEWER: Anything else on this please; even though it is on the negative side. Any suggestions to improve it while you are at it, please?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I have not talked at all yet about what was disappointing from me in the ...

INTERVIEWER: Please do.

INTERVIEWEE: The time required has got to be stated as a negative. It took me probably a full week or two weeks, if I did some other things during the day. So, two full weeks of time which, shjoe, few of us have got to spare, but if you honestly think it is important you make the time, so I did. And, as I said, I got a lot out of it – so, even if nothing else comes of it, I'm happy.

The participation rate is a terrible disappointment. I heard recently at the School Tuition Committee that there was one application from the whole (name of School), which is just disastrous, I think. Because, if I get it, I mean it just devalues the whole thing. If I get it, people would say, well there was only one application. If I don't get, that is even more embarrassing. I just think it's a disaster.

The other thing I think is negative, it's very much beside that one letter from (names of Executive Dean of College and Chair of

College Tuition Committee), I forget, everything has come from the ICLD and I think that sends a message to academics 'This is not your award, this is an ICLD award', or it is an ICLD plus management award. It is not given the backing of the people that really matter to us academics, in other words, our School Tuition Committee.

So, the School Tuition Committee sort of heard about it by via, via, via ..., in the same way as the academics and at no point did they say, sending out a message saying, 'You know guys, let's go for it. The School Tuition Committee really encourages you to participate' - I think that would have made a world of difference. Then it would have been a 360 degree message: management, ICLD and peers. So, that didn't happen, that was a pity. Even when I, sort of, although the date had closed by then ..., I am on the School Tuition Committee, and I said 'Well, surely as the School Tuition Committee, we must send out something', and that wasn't particularly taken up. But maybe next year.

The other thing I think that can be a negative for some other people, I never felt this as a negative, is exactly the point I've made about how it didn't go to the School Tuition Committees, aah, Departmental Tuition Committees. So, I think some people might have felt modest, too modest, to participate without somebody coming to them saying 'Listen, you are great, we love you, please submit'. So, departments didn't even have to ratify one's submission; I think maybe that would be a nice additional touch if, just maybe as an optional extra, you could have got a letter from your Departmental Tuition Committee or Head of Department saying, you know, 'We second this person's application or submission'. That might be nice.

The date is a big negative for me. End of June is a silly time, because that is middle of 101s and marking time. And I think probably that's exactly why you got one submission. End of May is my suggestion, because that's before the massive push on 101s, maybe before the massive marking hits. That's my suggestion.

A suggestion that doesn't come from me, but comes from the School Tuition Committee when we discussed it is that, just as with research, the award is given on the base of published research. It is not on the research process, it's not on how did you collect your data, bla-di-bla. It's on what you write in your research articles or in your books. Same thing could possibly apply to this award: instead of trying to assess all of these things that are difficult to assess, like how kind are you to your students, or how often do you contact them, those kind of touchy-feely, non-paper based things, which then have to be assessed using all sorts of funny evidence. It is certainly difficult to get that stuff together into a portfolio and to assess it.

So maybe, if you just assess the package. In my view the package consisting of a guide, tutorial letters, exams and statistics of those exams. I think you would get a fairly good picture of, you know, if this is a successful course, if this is a committed teacher, without making it just too large a portfolio. It just gets a bit intangible when you get into things like that. So I think that might be a way of just making it ..., condensing it a bit, making it more manageable and maybe getting a wider participation.

INTERVIEWER: That is excellent. Thank you very much. My question to you is, did you know what the process would be like after you have submitted, where would your material go, in whose hands did you entrust it?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, there was a document. I think I had an initial document from the ICLD; it said that the package must go to the head of the School Tuition Committee. I happen to be on it, so I knew who the person was. I went straight to (name of person on committee) and gave him my file and he said 'What is this? What am I supposed to do with it?' So, although I knew, certainly the School Tuition Committees are not fully informed and subsequent to this the School Tuition Committee set up a group, internal panel, but they were not sure how many people, exactly who should be involved. Anyway, they set up this panel but subsequent to that they came to

me and said, 'Where are those criteria, where can we get them'. So, anyway, I hope they have them by now. But, I think there definitely should have been more direct communication between the ICLD and the School Tuition Committee. They were working in the dark, they were not – maybe they are on board now - but they were not clear about what their brief was. Not to say that they're not serious about it, I mean, obviously they value tuition, they believe in it and I am convinced that they are gonna do their jobs to the best of their ability. But just the whole procedure, especially the fact that they had changed from last year. People were just not really informed.

INTERVIEWER: What would you say started the impression that this was an ICLD thing. It was not a ICLD thing, it was a ...

INTERVIEWEE: ... a management thing?

INTERVIEWER: It was a management thing. Where did the misinterpretation come from?

INTERVIEWEE: Maybe it's a personal thing. But, the fact that those initial guidelines were all about the ICLD, I don't know if your name was at the bottom or ..., that's why. Because the only communication that we had is a one page letter from management and then a 5 or 6 page set of guidelines from the ICLD.

INTERVIEWER: Now that is excellent. Anything else, before we summarise?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: That has been very, very, very helpful, thank you (name of participant). So, the process was good in some sense but also it lacked some coherence in another sense and we'll surely look into that. Thank you very much for your time.

INTERVIEWEE: Pleasure.

APPENDIX 6

EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW FROM PHASE THREE (EVALUATION PHASE) HELD ON 3 NOVEMBER 2005

INTERVIEWER: Good morning Professor (participant name). You've been part of the evaluation process for the Excellence in Tuition Awards in 2005 in your School and in your College and we appreciate your participation in that. The core questions in my investigation this morning are, firstly, what you found to be in this evaluation phase to be effective, regarding the process that was followed. In the second place, another core investigative idea or question would be, what you found to be ineffective. And of course we will appreciate in you have any remarks or contributions to make for us to improve the process for the future. Up to you, Professor.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay, we recently completed our evaluation process. I would prefer the first part of some of the shortcomings in the process. And then, maybe, we can focus on the efficiency or effective aspects of it as well.

I have a document that I prepared for our Tuition Committee which will serve tomorrow, that is now, what, Friday, the fourth. I will make this document available to you. Maybe it is easier to transcribe something that you already have.

The first point that I would like to make is that the participation in the College as well as in the School ... I would limit myself to the School experience, the participation was the same in these ...

INTERVIEWER: What is the name of the School, Professor (name of participant)?

INTERVIEWEE: The School of (name of School) and that consists of the Department of (list of names of departments).

The participation was disheartening. And the lack of interest, I think, one can trace to a number of reasons.

The first one certainly is the ordinate amount of time and effort that it would take to compile a teaching portfolio, for purposes of the reward.

The second possible reason for the lack of interest would be the vagueness, the complexity of the NADEOSA criteria that was given as a guideline.

A third one would be the necessity to harness evidence of excellence in teaching over a period, or periods, which may exceed more than one academic year.

Another one would be the uncertainty as to whether the Award can practise the four individuals. Considering that within a distant teaching framework a team approach is called for and promoted.

Another factor which may affect the lack of interest is the limited scope to excel in tuition, when aspects of good teaching are constrained by budgetary limits, or the teaching model itself.

So, those are some of the reasons, I think, why staff don't want to participate, just as a start.

Then on the more practical side, my experience with regard to the external evaluation process was that that process is also constrained by one or two factors.

The first one is the availability of subject specialists, on the one hand, and on the other hand, ODL specialist. It is not only the availability but one knows that the effort that has to go into the evaluation of a very comprehensive portfolio - the effort that goes into that, is considerable - at any time the equivalent of the effort that goes into examining a thesis. For the evaluator must not only know the subject but they have to scrutinise study guides, tutorial

letters, videos, they have to watch videos, CDs in some cases. So, it takes considerable time to do that.

Another problem from the external evaluators' side would be the lack of financial and institutional support to facilitate that process. It is totally uncoordinated, it is done on a School level not even a College level, it is done at School level, and in my particular case I had to physically take the portfolio to SAIDE in Johannesburg and luckily they could bring it through, since one of the Board Members, I think, is on our Council.

In the case of Pretoria University, I also had to take a few physically, just because of the time constraint and the material that we had in the portfolio are sensitive material. We don't want that to get lost in the post, it is very bulky, you know, copies, its up top there, it is a very bulky thing. So if you had to send that by courier, there are huge costs involved.

Then as far as the honoraria are concerned, there is no fixed honoraria, none of the Schools, I think, or Departments actually budgeted for the evaluation and I had to use the Director's budget – the School Director's budget - to transfer amounts from one resource category to another.

Then there could be inconsistencies, I think, between different Schools, Departments, Colleges as to what they pay the evaluators. And it is a dilemma in the sense of we make use of the same evaluators in many cases, in particular when it comes to the ODL specialist.

So, in our case I took it upon myself to pay them a fair amount, which I considered to be R2 000, for the portfolio which is way in excess I think what the other Colleges probably paid. But at the same time I was informed by SAIDE that normally they would charge R4 000 for an evaluation of this magnitude. So even the R2 000 may sound excessive, but it isn't.

So those are the factors, I think, that come to mind as far as the evaluation process is concerned and the lack of interest in the process.

What is effective or efficient about the process I haven't given any thought to. I just have seen it as a hassle/has-off (??). In principle it is about awarding excellence in tuition. I have no qualms about the principle of awarding tuition. That has been long overdue. But within the distance teaching environment, it has always been a dilemma as to how would you measure quality. Is it possible, as I indicated, to really identify individuals or an individual and that individual's contribution; is it a unique contribution or not?

It is again one of the experiences, that we were very uncertain as to whether the total monetary value of the award should go to the candidate that we evaluated. And it is purely on the basis of not taking your own interest into account that we decided in this case to give the full amount to the candidate. It can be contested by other staff members. It can be; for a Study Guide is something that grows over many years and it is very difficult to identify the exact contribution of a particular candidate.

There are issues of quality assurance in the Department that must be adhered to, so there are always other staff who participate in compiling tutorial letters, video material, whatever form of student support, there are always other staff that somehow participate.

It also has to do with the way in which Departments are managed and it's the prerogative of the Head of the Department as to who he will allocate to which module, and there are certainly somebody who lend them better to excellence in tuition awards than others.

So, again, I am not really getting to the point as to what are the effective aspects. I can just, you know, again point to the principle that it is a sound principle. But whether it is a practical matter at all, I have my serious doubts.

INTERVIEWER: Professor, thank you very much so far for what you are saying, it is very, very valuable to me. May we come back to the process of the internal evaluation, just talk about that a little bit.

The guidelines clearly stated what the panels internally had to do, the guidelines were written up. Did you follow the guidelines, were they practical, were they realistic in terms of designing, developing the people to be evaluated internally. Was it worth your while or did you follow another route?

INTERVIEWEE: We followed another route. We regarded the guidelines as guidelines. The NADEOSA criteria – six, I think, they were - as I indicated, we thought were a bit on the vague side. So we used another set of criteria based on the NADEOSA quality criteria.

And I think those criteria were used the previous round by other Colleges as well. It sets up a number of questions that the evaluator has to ask, not necessarily answer. It is a question form of assessment then.

The second thing that we did then, was to assign weights to the different criteria, and those weights were determined in a particular manner. Once we've done the so-called pair-wise assigning of weights we then made the portfolios available to the external evaluators and they had to rank the different criteria. In the final process we made a simple calculation and we calculated the overall ranking there, of the portfolios.

But coming to the internal evaluation process, since we had only one portfolio and we know the Department, we know the person, we also had a thorough look at the comprehensiveness of the portfolio itself, that it complied with everything that possibly can be included in a portfolio, and the mere fact that the person was willing to go to that extreme to compile a portfolio of that magnitude satisfied us that at least the external evaluation process should proceed.

And we then decided that as long as the ranking indicated excellence by the external evaluators, in other words if the ranking exceeded 75%, we would accept the ranking as final, that it deserves. And particularly since we made use of a subject specialist that evaluated both the subject content as well as the package itself, plus the ODL specialist, gave us enough to proceed.

INTERVIEWER: Was the ICLD involved, were they the ODL specialist, and would you like to involve them in future or do you have reservations about that – including them in the process?

INTERVIEWEE: In the internal evaluation process we had a meeting and ICLD had a representative there in the person of Mr (name of ICLD staff member).

We are a bit hesitant as to whether we should make use of the ICLD again. For the simple reason that during the previous round, in other words the first round of excellent tuition awards, we went the ICLD route, with the same package and the report that was compiled on the basis of the package was extremely negative, to the extent that that could be considered as one of the reasons why there was hesitancy to participate in the process at all.

At that stage we also felt that there is one only aspect of the evaluation that is done and that is on the basis of the package itself. So, you look at design aspects. So, the idea was, we formed the idea that it is an award for design.

Now, as I said, the same package was now submitted to an external ODL specialist who produced a very raving report about the same package. So, that puts a bit of a question mark about the objectivity of the ICLD itself and also because of the ICLD is, you know, they have an interest sometimes in the package itself, they were party to that. If they are not involved in the evaluation process itself they also had an interest to shoot down their own colleagues, for that matter, how strange that may sound. But it is

an opportunity that you have to get to your colleagues. To show them that, you know, there are a number of shortcomings in a particular Study Guide, or whatever it might be.

INTERVIEWER: Would you agree to the fact that other specialists should also be cooperated in this internal team, for instance instructional designers - the graphic designers, I am sorry, of Unisa Press, editors, people from the Production Department maybe – for the whole design package - would you say there is a vacuum of speciality in the team, internally?

INTERVIEWEE: I have a very different opinion on the Excellence in Tuition Awards. You have two options, I think. One is to go the ideal route. The ideal route is to include all these specialists and make sure that you really, make sure that the individual or the team is evaluated in every aspect – that’s the one approach. It’s a very comprehensive approach, it is as far as I am concerned, totally over-kill. Totally.

If you walk into a simple franchise, you will always find a photo of one of the employees, Employee of the Month, or Employee of the Year, or whatever. And if every company or every institution were to go through such a thorough process, just to identify who is the employee of the year, then no awards would be made.

And I cannot for a moment think why it is not possible for a Department to be able to identify, using their own criteria, to identify who is the Academic of the Year, who is the Tutor or Teacher or Lecturer of the Year. It cannot be that difficult. And I’m sure that one can build in a certain checks and balances that such a person should not be considered, you know, again in a three-year cycle or four or five-year cycle, or whatever.

It can also be required from Departments to, at least, compile a report as to why they think the person is a deserving candidate. One can build in democratic rules, if you wish; there can be a show of hands or voting process. They can be simplified.

Then one would obviously think about the monetary value itself and maybe limit the monetary value as such; in stead of having R25 000 per School, one could probably bring it down to R15 000 per Department, for that matter. And at least that could then serve as an incentive to staff. It would at least make it possible for everyone then to participate and not necessarily just the real excellent teaching staff.

INTERVIEWER: Professor (name of participant), you have made a lot of recommendations; your ideas are sound for the future. It may be considered on a higher level. Is there anything you would like to add to the discussion, a burning issue that you would like to reiterate, or something new?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you Professor. I appreciate your time. Thank you.