



ODL COMMUNIQUÉ 6, 19 MARCH 2010

AN OVERVIEW OF THIS WEEK'S COMMUNIQUÉ

1. A progress report on ODL Task team 1 (Admissions)
2. Some personal reflections after the first meetings of all six ODL Task teams
3. An invitation to an information session on the proposal for a longer curriculum and course development cycle to be held in Pretoria *and* Florida.

1 PROGRESS REPORT REGARDING TASK TEAM 1: ADMISSIONS

The different colleges submitted their drafted admission requirements and these were discussed. From the submissions it was clear that a general “one size fits all” set of requirements will *not* suit the individual needs of the colleges. There was strong support for Unisa to consider a general English language requirement for students with an NSC should they choose English as their tuition language. It was also emphasised that that mathematics and mathematical literacy were vastly different. To have a certain symbol in mathematics as requirement and then require a higher symbol in mathematical literacy is not a valid arrangement. These two NSC subjects were based on two completely different curricula. Colleges who made such a distinction were asked to reconsider. An interesting point was raised whether mathematical literacy should not be considered also in CHS as students on third year level or when doing honours need a certain level of mathematical literacy. This was, however, an issue which should be left to Colleges.



Part of the team meeting with Prof Ian Alderton, Prof Kris Pillay and Prof Divya Singh facing the camera.



From left to right: Prof A van Schoor, Prof D Singh, Prof L Cornwell, Ms V Ndlovu, Prof I Alderton, Dr B Zawada, Mr V Balmakund, Mr A Sibindi, Ms G Zikhali and Dr P Prinsloo

2. SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS AFTER THE FIRST MEETINGS OF ALL SIX ODL TASK TEAMS

All six ODL task teams have had their first meetings and for the first time it is possible to reflect on the shared trends and issues impacting on the implementation of ODL at Unisa, as specifically envisaged by the work of the different task teams.

2.1 The following “drivers” impact on all the different task teams: (1) becoming/being an ODL institution; (2) the impact of changes in funding and subsidy regimes (i.e. enrolment capping, planning and management); (3) the rationalised and invigorated PQM; (4) changes in the student profile with regard to its diversity and competencies; (5) the impact of technologies and (6) processes, structures and systems (including delivery modes, etc) and the history of these processes, structures and systems.

Not all of the above impact equally on all task teams. Although the different task teams have different foci, these foci are all related and at times overlap.

2.2 Though the generic admission requirements will assist in addressing enrolment capping and allowing better prepared students into degrees/diploma studies, the new admission requirements are not the only factor to take into account. In the bigger picture of enrolment planning and management, race and gender will also play a very important role together with academic preparedness.

2.3 The envisaged higher certificate can play a vital role in “growing our own timber” in specific degrees *where we need to grow our student numbers*. To offer a higher certificate in colleges or CESM categories in which we already have too many students may be counter-productive, unless there is a specific part of our student profile in these over-supplied areas which we need to grow eg in CHS with regard to social work students, in CEMS in accounting studies, or in general in CAES or CSET. *The high certificate could be a very focused and timely response to specific trends in enrolment and national priorities.*

2.4 In order for Unisa to implement effective enrolment planning and management, and to allow students enough time to prepare for the result of their applications to study through Unisa, it may be necessary to require students to already apply in *Grade 11*.

2.5 With regard to assessment practices, offering student support and using technologies effectively, it is becoming clear that *there is no one size that fits all*. What may be appropriate in one context/discipline may not be appropriate in another. What is however clear is the fact that Unisa needs clear guidelines and minimum standards regarding the different alternatives in assessment, student support and use of technologies.

- 2.6. There is a history to the different structures and processes that informs and sustains certain pedagogical practices at Unisa. These structures and processes were developed in specific eras in response to specific assumptions and needs. The ODL implementation provides an opportunity to courageously interrogate the different structures and processes. Form *follows* function. In some instances at Unisa, form precedes and determines function.
- 2.7. There is not one task team that is more critical than the others. In my personal opinion there is however one task team that encompasses the ideals of all the others, namely the sixth task team on student retention, success, and throughput.
- Who we admit and how we admit students as well as what we admit them to, has a direct relation to student retention, success and throughput.
 - How do we support those whom we admit at different times and phases of their learning journey (student walk) to optimise their chances of success?
 - How do we ensure that our assessment practices flow from sound pedagogical reasons and not just because our practices are shaped by student numbers or available venues? Do our assessment practices really provide the optimum opportunity to enabled students to show us what they can do? Do our teaching practices really enable them to become able...?
 - Why do we choose what technologies we use, when and for whom? What is the pedagogical rationale for our technological choices? Do we choose technologies to increase students' retention, success and throughput?
 - Based on what evidence do we make our choices and change our practices, structures and processes?

3 AN INVITATION TO AN INFORMATION SESSION ON THE PROPOSAL FOR A LONGER CURRICULUM AND COURSE DEVELOPMENT CYCLE TO BE HELD IN PRETORIA AND FLORIDA.

The ODL Implementation plan envisages a review of the current three-year module revision cycle. A draft proposal has been presented to the STLSC of 15 March 2010. *The Rationale for a Seven Year 2nd Order CESM Directed Cycle of Curriculum and Courseware review.* A draft narrative was referred to the wider Unisa community for comments.

You are cordially invited to a general information session **in Pretoria** on **3 May 2010** from 13:30 till 15:00 in the Senate Hall and **in Florida** on **11 May** from 14:00-15:30 (venue to be announced). During these sessions the draft proposal will be discussed and the main arguments presented for scrutiny.

Copies of the draft proposal is available from Ms Tshoanelo Mokoena, PA to the ODL Project at TVW 4-56, + 27 (0) 12-429 6173 (office), mokoets@unisa.ac.za.

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