



ODL COMMUNIQUÉ 3, 26 FEBRUARY 2010

PROGRESS REPORT OF TASK TEAM 2: HIGHER CERTIFICATE

The team had their first meeting on Monday 22 February under the leadership of Prof Rosemary Moeketsi. At present students complete their high school with one National Senior Certificate (NSC) but with different designators namely NSC – Higher certificate or NSC – Diploma or NSC – Degree. The category of students (NSC- Higher certificate) therefore does not have recourse to register for diplomas or degrees as they are also excluded from applying for Senate’s Discretionary Exemption.

The Task team will investigate the possibility to offer a Higher Certificate which will serve the different Colleges with an alternative access route to Advanced Certificates, Diplomas and Degrees. The task team will advise the STLSC on

- The feasibility of offering a Higher Certificate.
- The progression routes on completion of the Certificate.
- If feasible, a proposal for offering a general Higher Certificate or a college specific Higher Certificate.
- The structure/content of the Higher Certificate.

During their first meeting the task team considered the following questions: Why should Unisa offer a higher certificate? How will it impact on enrolment capping and Unisa’s and departments’ capacities and resources? How will it impact on the current concerns about unfunded students at Unisa? The Higher Certificate will be offered on HEQF 5, with minimum total credits of 120. The focus of a higher certificate is primarily *vocational or industry specific and provides basic introductory knowledge*. The offering of the higher certificate does not impact on the *Responsible Open Access Programme (ROAP)* as ROAP is not providing admissions for non-qualifying students. The structure of such a higher certificate is open for discussion. The task team considered the following questions: Should Unisa offer one higher certificate with a strong vocational basis for students who do not want to continue in higher education (but who would be able to do so on successful completion), and a higher certificate for students who want to continue in higher education (but should they not, they have a HEQF 5 qualification)?

The team will consider whether the structure of such a higher certificate should entail five modules generic in nature (eg study skills, computer literacy, English reading skills, etc) and five modules in which students can choose to study in a more specific field (eg offered by the five different colleges). Another pertinent question is: Where will students go to after successful completion of the higher certificate? How will they be credited and on what basis?



At the first meeting of Task Team 2, were
(from left to right):

Prof MK Havenga, Dr P Kayoka, Prof MP van Rooy, Dr E Smith, Ms M Snyman, Mr T Nkambule, Prof R Moeketsi (convenor), Mr MJ Mashiapata, Prof S Moshokoa

PROGRESS REPORT OF TASK TEAM 4: STUDENT SUPPORT

This task team has a lot on its plate. The ODL Implementation plan has tasked this team to rethink Unisa's definition of student support; develop a comprehensive and robust conceptual model for student support as well as critically evaluate and redesign student support strategies and initiatives.

Dr Japie Heydenrych who is leading this team convened its first meeting on Wednesday 24 February. Judging by the lively discussions and energy of the group, they can't wait to start with their task of really developing a world-class student support model for Unisa. The emphasised the need to establish an institutional baseline audit of what current student support initiatives are currently offered, by whom, to whom, what feedback has been received regarding the effectiveness of the initiative, and what changes are foreseen or necessary in the delivery of the initiative to increase its effectiveness. This audit will include an audit on the use of multimedia and a range of technologies in supporting students. This audit is envisaged to be done in collaboration with Task Team 5 tasked to examine technology enhanced teaching, learning and student support at Unisa. The meeting stressed that it is very important, after these audits, to identify capacity opportunities, challenges and constraints and to propose strategies to address these.

With a clear understanding of current offerings and initiatives as well as an indication of the effectiveness of these offerings and initiatives, the next step will then be to define, based on the new conceptual model, what will be needed to support the implementation of the new conceptual model. This will address the current gap between having strategies to increase the effectiveness of Unisa's student support and the support necessary to implement *and* sustain these strategies.

All the planned initiatives should take into serious consideration how Unisa supports students with a range of disabilities and special needs. The team was also unanimous in stating that it is also important to take into account the increasing international distribution of Unisa's students and the need to support these students effectively.



At the first meeting of Task Team 4 were (*from left to right*): Mr Tony Mays, Dr Japie Heydenrych, Prof Moses Montesh, Ms Hanneri Botha, Ms Ilze Holtzhausen de Beer, Dr Judy Henning, Mr Roland Mauries, Ms Hentie Wilson, Ms Laura Schultz, Dr Eleanor Johannes, Mr Anton Jordaan, Ms Rochelle Wessels, Prof Ilsa Basson, Dr At van Schoor, Mr Colin Diggins.