



ODL COMMUNIQUÉ 8, 1 APRIL 2010

AN OVERVIEW OF THIS WEEK'S COMMUNIQUÉ

1. Feedback on the second meeting of **ODL Task Team 3: Assessment**.
2. Feedback from Prof Peter Havenga regarding the WIL component of the envisaged Higher Certificate.
3. General progress overview.

1 PROGRESS REPORT REGARDING *ODL TASK TEAM 3: ASSESSMENT*

The team met on 29 March to discuss progress and their next steps. At their previous meeting a template was designed to assess current assessment practices and the representatives from colleges and stakeholders were requested to harvest information. The template had the following foci:

- An overview of current assessment practices
- What are the educational advantages of these practices?
- What are the educational disadvantages of these practices?
- What is the feedback from lecturers about these practices?
- What is the feedback from students about these practices?
- How do different systems/procedures at Unisa impact on these practices? (This is not about blaming, but to get a sense of the constraints)

Feedback was received from CAES, CHS, CSET, IODL, CLAW, and CEMS. The feedback was discussed and the following points were presented:

- If we think of alternative assessment practices, we should consider, alternative to what? Alternatives should be informed by what is currently happening.
- What would be the pedagogical rationale for proposing alternative assessment practices?
- One size does not fit all. What works in one department, college, module or qualification may not necessarily work in another context.
- Some assessment practices may be used for summative *and* formative assessment purposes.
- There are also venue-based assessments and non-venue based assessments.
- Currently Unisa assumes that by assessing the individual modules, that we will assure that students (somehow) meet the exit-level criteria for the diploma/degree. Students' competencies in the exit-level outcomes of a diploma/degree are seldom assessed. Capstone modules, capstone assessment/projects and work-integrated learning or simulated work environment learning may be ways to assess students' "graduateness".

- What do we hope to achieve with the proposal that we will submit to the STLSC? Definitely not a prescriptive document but rather a rich resource or “toolkit” which departments and colleges could use to harvest ideas from. The proposal should also provide clear indicators regarding the educational advantages and disadvantages of different alternative assessment practices, quality standards that these practices should adhere to and processes and procedures as well as system requirements to implement and support such practices.

The team decided on the following next steps: **Neels Bothma (CEMS)** will collate the different college and stakeholder reports into one document which will provide a picture of current practices at Unisa, the advantages and disadvantages of these practices, lecturer and student feedback regarding those practices and indicators regarding how Unisa’s systems impact on these practices. He will by 6 April share his draft with Mr Chris Opperman and after receiving further input will circulate a final document by **16 April**. **Mr Chris Opperman (Student assessment administration)** will compile an overview of assessment practices currently in use at Unisa – challenges, opportunities, and system requirements. He will circulate the document to the team by **16 April**.

A small group consisting of the following members will compile an overview of alternative assessment practices (educational advantages, disadvantages, quality standards, as well as module and qualification specific assessment practices (eg to assess gradueness). This overview and guidelines will not be prescriptive or very general but provide informed guidance to academics and departments. They will circulate a final document to the team by **16 April**:

- Ms Marinkie Madiope (DCLD)
- Prof Sunette Lötter (CLAW)
- Prof Louie Swanepoel (DSPQA)
- Prof Marietha Nieman (CHS)
- Ms Ilze du Plooy (CEMS)
- Prof Solly Magano (CAES)
- Dr Gugu Moche (CSET)
- Prof Ann-Mari Hesselink (CLAW)

Dr Britta Zawada (CHS) will write a short rationale as introduction to the above three documents by **16 April**. **Ms Elfriede Boshoff (ICT)** will develop a task team portal/site where documentation can be shared. **Prof Ansie Minnaar (IODL)** offered to do a concise literature review on alternative assessment practices in higher education.

The next meeting will be on **21 April from 13:00-14:30** at which the final report will be discussed and a small team dedicated to finalise the proposal which will be submitted to the STLSC meeting of 10 May (submission date 26 April).

2 FEEDBACK REGARDING THE WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL) COMPONENT OF A HIGHER CERTIFICATE

At the previous meeting of *ODL Task Team 2: Higher Certificate* on 23 March, the possibility and viability of offering a Higher Certificate was discussed. The team also looked at different advantages, disadvantages and challenges regarding the offering of such a Higher Certificate. One of the challenges was to interpret the HEQF's guidelines regarding the work-integrated learning component of a Higher Certificate. The HEQF further describes the higher certificate as follows (Government Gazette No.30353, 2007:19)

This is an entry-level higher education qualification. The qualification is primarily vocational, or industry oriented. The qualification also serves to provide students with the basic introductory knowledge, cognitive and conceptual tools and practical techniques for further higher education studies in their chosen field of study. The knowledge emphasises general principles and application. This qualification signifies that the student has attained a basic level of higher education knowledge and competence in a particular field or occupation and is capable of applying such knowledge and competence in an occupation or role in the workplace. The Higher Certificate typically includes a simulated work experience or work integrated learning (WIL) component.

It was not very clear whether the WIL or work-integrated learning component was a sine qua non of offering a Higher Certificate. After the draft minutes of the meeting were circulated, Prof Havenga responded as follows:

I think the answer can be found in the section in the HEQF describing the purpose and characteristic of the Higher Certificate. Although it is described as being **primarily** vocational, or industry oriented, the qualification **also serves to provide students with the basic introductory knowledge, cognitive and conceptual tools and practical techniques for further higher education studies** in their chosen field of study. It is also stated that it **typically** (normally/usually) includes a WIL component but nowhere is this made a mandatory requirement. I should also mention that my discussion with the DoHET/HEQC it has never been mentioned that a Higher Certificates must have a WIL component. I would therefore suggest that a WIL module is not a sine qua non of offering the Higher Certificate.

3 GENERAL PROGRESS OVERVIEW

ODL Task team 1: Admissions, convened by Prof Divya Singh, had their first meeting on 12 March. After the previous STLSC meeting on 15 March, the team was allowed extension on their original timeline and they will submit their proposal in time for the meet the due date for the June 2010 Senate meeting. The team will meet again on **9 April 2010**. All Colleges are requested to have given consideration to the specific admission requirements for both the NSC and SC (the predecessor to the NSC) taking cognizance of the directive from the STLSC regarding the generic nature of the admission requirements.

ODL Task team 2: Higher Certificate, under the leadership of Prof Rosemary Moeketsi, has already met twice and will at their next (and final meeting) discuss a draft proposal regarding the possibility and viability of offering a Higher Certificate. They will submit their proposal in time for the next STLSC meeting in May.

ODL Task team 3: Assessment, convened by Dr Gugu Moche, has also met twice and is in the process of finalising their proposal on alternative assessment practices. The team's proposal will also serve at the next STLSC meeting in May.

ODL Task team 4: Student Support, under leadership of Dr Japie Heydenrych, is on schedule to submit a draft conceptual framework for student support at Unisa at the STLSC meeting of May. Their draft proposal will also contain pointers towards the implementation of the key points of their proposed conceptual framework.

ODL Task team 5: Technology enhanced teaching, learning and student support will also submit their draft conceptual model to the next STLSC meeting in May. The team divided into four smaller teams and have done a lot of preparation which will inform their proposal. The team is led by Mr Deon van der Merwe.

ODL Task team 6: Student retention, success and throughput under the leadership of Prof George Subotzky, had one meeting on 10 March where a smaller working group was formed in order to submit, by May an institutional success and throughput strategy.

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