

## SUBMISSION IDENTIFIERS:

<b>Title</b>	<b>Report on Academic Monitoring and Support in UKZN 2009 – 2010</b>
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## APPROVAL HISTORY

Structure consulted	Target date for discussion	Date approved
UTLC		12 October 2010
Senate	3 November 2010	

## SUBMISSION CONTENT

### **Proposal**

To consider the report on academic monitoring and support across UKZN Faculties which have been derived from Faculty reports on their monitoring and support systems and approve the recommendations arising from the report.

### **Motivation**

This report is tabled in compliance with the senate approved recommendation that UTLC provide annual reports on the academic monitoring and support systems in Faculties according to agreed minimum criteria. Moreover, the approved university Academic Monitoring and Exclusions Policy and Procedures requires Faculties to develop and have effective monitoring and support systems in place.

This report provides a synthesis of Faculty monitoring and support initiatives based on reports provided by them. It reveals that Faculties have instituted monitoring and support systems with varying degrees of functionality and effectiveness.

However, despite substantial investments in monitoring and support systems, the undergraduate graduation rate for 3- and 4-year degrees has continued to decline from 20% in 2006 to 17% in 2009 with some programmes in some Faculties experiencing higher student attrition (in the form of dropout and exclusion rates) than graduations. While student exclusion is on the decrease student dropout is not and requires further investigation.

Cohorts analysis of the undergraduate degree programmes demonstrates the challenge the university faces in not adequately supporting students who fail to complete their degree programmes in minimum time. The 2007 cohort (3919 students) in 3-year degree programmes, for example, has 41% of students still registered after the minimum time. Student attrition currently at 24% is higher than graduation which is 23%. The 4-year professional degrees 2006 cohort (1478 students) shows similarly that only 37% graduated in minimum time whilst 28% were still registered and 23% were excluded or dropped out. However there are significant within faculty variations which are presented in the report.

Three recommendations are presented for comment and approval.

**Financial implications:** None

**Attachments:** Report on Academic Monitoring and Support in UKZN: 2009 – 2010

## Report on Academic Monitoring and Support in UKZN 2009 – 2010

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## ACADEMIC MONITORING AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS IN FACULTIES

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is submitted in compliance with the Senate approved recommendation for UTLC to provide annual reports on Faculty Academic Monitoring and Systems, derived from Faculties' annual reports of their monitoring and support programmes. The report assesses Faculties' levels of compliance with Senate approved minimum criteria for evaluating academic monitoring and support across Faculties, evaluates successes of the monitoring and support initiatives while highlighting the challenges faced for the reporting period, concluding with a set of recommendations. Further, in accordance with a senate approved recommendation from the last report and in an attempt to provide deeper insights into drop out, exclusion and graduation rates and to track the efficacy of the monitoring and support initiative, the report undertakes a cross sectional cohort analysis of student movement in different cohorts from each year of 2004 to 2007. It analyses trends in graduation, exclusions and dropouts for each of the different undergraduate cohorts in 3- and 4-year undergraduate degree programmes in Faculties.

A key expectation of the approved university Academic Monitoring and Exclusions Policy and Procedures is that the monitoring and support should become integrated into each Faculty's core activities. It is evident from the reports tabled that Faculties are moving in this direction, although at this stage, implementation and effectiveness across Faculties are uneven. Furthermore, the breadth and depth of data analysis varies from one Faculty to another, making it difficult to arrive at definitive judgments about the usefulness of the monitoring and support strategies, without the requisite analyses.

Faculties have designed and implemented a range of intervention and support programmes which include the "monitoring chart system", which tracks students' progress in a transparent way; embedding academic support within core modules; offering support for 'at risk' students through student counselling, mentorship and the Writing Place; Supplemental Instruction; targeting potential 'at risk' students from registration to exam completion. In general, most Faculties make extensive use of Academic Development Officers (ADO's) in their monitoring and support activities.

Faculty reports indicate that most have complied with the Senate approved minimum criteria, namely, the availability of personnel; intervention strategies at Faculty and School level; the availability of academic, personal and career counselling; tracking of student performance; records and record keeping; evaluation; resources; sustainability; research carried out and statistical reporting. In most Faculties, a Senior Academic has been appointed to coordinate Academic Monitoring and Support activities and most Faculties have measures in place to identify and support 'at risk' students. In some Faculties the process actually begins at registration and in others the process has been institutionalized within the Faculty structures.

A noteworthy trend is that some Faculties have begun to initiate evaluations, reviews and research on support and interventions at Faculty/School levels including research seminars and symposia. In addition, Faculties are accessing research and innovation grants to provide an empirical evaluation of their monitoring and support initiatives.

Despite the successes noted above, Faculties have identified several challenges. Of particular concern is the relative "instability" of their support system because it is typically staffed by Academic Development

Officers who are on short term contracts. This also impacts on the Faculties' capacity to enforce mandatory consultations as required of the policy.

Since 2009, substantial funding has been made available to Faculties for monitoring and support, totalling more than 5 million for 2009/2010 which has been disbursed through UTLO (which excludes Faculties own budgets). Despite this investment and the institutional support provided, the graduation rate has continued to decline from 20% in 2006 to 17% in 2009 with some programmes in some Faculties experiencing higher dropout and exclusion rates than graduations. While student exclusion is on the decrease, student dropout is not.

The 2007 cohort in 3-year Bachelor's Degrees indicates the university's failure to support students to complete degree programmes in minimum time. 41% of the students are still registered after the minimum period compared to 23% who are able to graduate in the minimum time. Currently at 24%, student attrition is higher than the graduation rate. The 4-year professional degrees 2006 cohort (1478 students) shows along similar lines that only 37% graduated in minimum time whilst 28% were still registered and 23% were excluded or dropped out. However there are significant within faculty variations which are presented in the report.

The disappointing graduation data signals the need to interrogate where the focus is or should be placed in academic monitoring and support. Serious questions need to be raised about whether the investment in Access and first year support is generating the expected outcomes, and whether greater effort and investment should be extended to supporting students in their 2<sup>nd</sup> and subsequent years. In this regard, a cost-benefit analysis of existing support would be instructive. In addition, little is known about the impact of financial factors on dropouts and exclusions, and whether the same factors that affect dropout also affect graduation. In this regard, a more nuanced understanding of the dropout phenomenon would also be useful.

In addressing the challenges identified above, the following recommendations are proposed.

Firstly, there is an urgent need to conduct university wide research to obtain a deeper understanding of how financial factors contribute to exclusions and dropouts. To this end, ring fenced funding for commissioned studies and system development by university and/or outside specialists is proposed.

Secondly, both the 2009 and 2010 Academic and Monitoring and Support reports were derived from self-evaluation reports by Faculties, the veracity of which had not been tested. An independent evaluation by QPA is proposed to identify effective interventions and strategies that have yielded greatest successes for wider dissemination of what works in academic monitoring and support as well as what does not, flagging areas that require improvement and related action plans.

Finally, funding for academic monitoring has been provided from DOHET Teaching Development Grants which vary from year to year and from university main funds which are motivated for by the DVC (Teaching & Learning) according to individual proposals made by Faculties to UTLO. Colleges need to integrate provision for academic monitoring and support into their budgets to ensure that the system is stable, institutionalised and sustainable.

## PREAMBLE

This report is submitted in compliance with the Senate approved recommendation for UTLC to provide annual reports on Faculty Academic Monitoring and Systems. The report is divided into two parts.

**Part 1** sketches the context and background of the academic monitoring and support initiatives, synthesises data provided by Faculties in reports tabled at the UTLC of 6 September 2010, assesses Faculties' levels of compliance with Senate approved minimum criteria for evaluating academic monitoring and support across Faculties, evaluates successes of the monitoring and support initiatives while highlighting the challenges faced for the reporting period and concludes with a set of recommendations in taking the process forward.

**Part 2** undertakes a cross sectional cohort analysis of student movement in different cohorts from each year of 2004 to 2007. It analyses trends in graduation, exclusions and dropouts currently for each of the different undergraduate cohorts in 3- and 4- year undergraduate degree programmes in Faculties. The purpose of this analysis is to provide deeper insights into drop out, exclusion and graduation rates which necessitate the provision of student academic monitoring and support at UKZN.

## PART 1:

### 1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The *Academic Monitoring and Exclusions Policy and Procedures* (Appendix A), approved by Senate (4 November 2009) and Council (4 December 2009) <sup>1</sup>

*“acknowledges that academic monitoring and support is important to retain students through a wide range of student-focused support systems and learning environments that enable them to complete their studies successfully. Students will only be excluded on account of poor academic performance as a last resort after all other avenues have failed to restore their academic performance to the required level. The policy commits the university to identifying under-performing students timeously and providing the necessary academic support to assist students to graduate in the minimum time possible or redirect them and obligates students to attend and participate in the range of support that is made available”*

The University Teaching and Learning Committee developed an Academic Monitoring and Support template based on Senate approved minimum criteria to assist Faculties to implement and report on their Academic Monitoring and Support Systems. In addition to their own funding, the DVC: Teaching and Learning, made available funding to Faculties from the DOHET Teaching Development Grant and the universities own main fund budget. A key aspect of ensuring the efficient functioning of the system was the appointment of a senior academic as coordinator, to take responsibility for overseeing the system and reporting periodically to UTLO on academic monitoring and support activities and their outcomes.

This part of the report is intended to achieve the following outcomes:

1. It synthesizes data provided by Faculties in reports tabled at the UTLC of 6 September 2010

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the complexity of rules for alternative access and postgraduate students, this document applies to regular entry undergraduate students only.

2. It assesses Faculties' levels of compliance with approved minimum senate criteria for evaluating academic monitoring and support across Faculties
3. It appraises successes of the monitoring and support initiative while highlighting the challenges faced during the reporting period
4. It proposes a set of recommendations in taking the process forward

## 2. MONITORING AND SUPPORT PRACTICES IN FACULTIES/SCHOOLS

A central expectation of the Academic Monitoring and Exclusions Policy and Procedures is that the exercise should become integrated into each Faculties core activities. It is evident from the reports tabled that Faculties are moving in this direction, although at this stage, implementation and effectiveness across Faculties is uneven. Furthermore, the breadth and depth of data analysis varies from one Faculty to another, making it difficult to arrive at definitive judgments about the usefulness of the monitoring and support strategies without the requisite analyses. Below is a summary of Faculty monitoring and support practices as contained in the Faculty reports.

**The Faculty of Education** uses the "Monitoring Chart System", which requires students to meet twice each semester with each of their module tutors, module co-ordinators, and academic counsellors. Each staff member is expected to comment on the student's progress and sign the chart after each meeting with the student. This is intended to provide transparency between staff and students with regard to the student's progress. The deputy Dean makes a comment on the progress of each learner at the end of the semester.

**The Faculty of Law**, motivated by the findings from the SANTED SUKAR – Law Project and input from Faculty staff, decided to embed as much of the academic support as possible within the core modules of the LLB degree. The focus has also been extended to the first two years of the LLB degree. Consequently, in 2010, academic support is being given to first and second year students, with a particular focus on written academic and legal literacy.

**The Faculty of Humanities, Development & Social Sciences** offers support through mentorship and the Writing Place. In addition, student counseling services help in diagnosing challenges faced by 'at risk' students which includes those related academic, financial or psychological conditions. Mentees, who are senior students, are appointed to assist 1<sup>st</sup> years. 'At risk' students are targeted from registration to exam completion and are assisted with appropriate module registration. All 1<sup>st</sup> year students are forced to participate in the mentorship programme. 'At risk' students to attend programmes on Academic Development and Student Support (ADSS) which is conceptualized on student monitoring and support, curriculum development and capacity building of faculty.

**The Faculty of Engineering** uses the Supplemental Instruction (SI) programme which has an average module participation of approximately 50% of students within a semester, with 20% attending regularly (every two weeks or more depending on the module). Participation in counselling is generally high with around 500 students (varying by semester) attending counselling sessions in each semester. Participation in workshops varies from week to week with a high of 110 students attending a computer literacy workshop to average attendances of 20-30 students for most workshops. Due to the time stresses of the engineering curriculum, attendance is not as high as hoped.

**In the Faculty of Management Studies**, the responsibility for the academic mentoring and monitoring within the Faculty Education Unit has been carried by the Academic Mentoring and Monitoring Coordinator. Literacy modules and writing courses are meant to assist students academically. The School of Economics runs an intervention for second year students in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester providing continuous assessment and on-line feedback for one section of the syllabus. The Faculty makes extensive use of Academic Development Officers to provide academic literacy support for ‘at risk’ students.

**The Faculty of Science and Agriculture** has a variety of intervention Strategies at Faculty and School Level including the signing of “commitment” letters at registration with students at risk and on probation; dedicating a day each week for students to approach the Academic Development Coordinator for academic counseling or other student support matters; partnering with Student Counselling Services on Compulsory Profiling of Risk and Probation students using the Learning Enhancement Checklist (LEC).

**The Faculty of Health Sciences** has a history of ongoing support including Faculty appointed student mentors, ADO’s in every Discipline and close collaboration and twinning with Student Counselling (Westville Campus). “At Risk” students are ‘targeted’ from registration to exam completion and monitored closely, ensuring realistic and appropriate module registration, identification of resources to assist and follow up to ensure compliance. ADO’s appointed are also either discipline trained individuals (eg a qualified Physiotherapist who serves as the discipline trained individual) or individuals with education and/or psychology backgrounds. A system is in place for tracking students including referrals, participation, and performance. Relevant statistics are analysed and reports provided for further dissemination in faculty forums.

**The NR Mandela Medical School** has a variety of intervention Strategies at Faculty and School Level to ensure that students who perform poorly receive academic counseling from the ADP and year coordinators. They are referred to the student counsellor to ensure that there is no underlying personal or social issues that may be contributing to poor performance. The Student Counselling centre at the medical school is pro active and supportive with regard to academic support. A special instrument designed by student counseling and the ADP coordinator has been implemented to get timeous information for ‘At Risk’ students with regard to personal and career adjustments and related problems.

### **3. FACULTIES’ COMPLIANCE WITH APPROVED SENATE CRITERIA**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This section of the academic monitoring and support report assesses Faculties’ compliance with the approved senate criteria in academic monitoring and support as reflected in their reports tabled at the UTLC meeting of 6 September 2010. The assessment focuses on the availability of personnel, intervention strategies at Faculty and School level, availability of academic counseling, personal and career counseling, tracking of student performance, records and record keeping, evaluation, resources, sustainability, research carried out and statistical reporting.

#### **3.1 PERSONNEL**

Most Faculties have appointed senior Academics to coordinate academic monitoring and support activities within the Faculties. Faculties of Education, Engineering, Health Sciences, Law, Humanities, Development and Social sciences, Science and Agriculture and The Medical School all have senior academics appointed to coordinate academic monitoring and support activities. The Faculty of

Management Studies indicates that the Academic Mentoring and Monitoring coordinator is currently appointed in a temporary capacity and there are plans for a permanent appointment.

Some Faculties such as Faculty of Engineering and Health Sciences do have Academic Development Officers who work together with the appointed senior academics in coordinating academic monitoring and support. In the Faculty of Education, administrative support staff members have not been identified but the Faculty recognises the need for the identification and appointment of administrative staff to ensure that work on academic monitoring and support is effectively done. Some Faculties have well-supported systems of identification and counselling of at-risk students, involving the Deputy-Deans, Deans' Assistants and Year Coordinators. The Faculty of Engineering Academic Support and Advancement Programme (ASAP) is integrated in the faculty structures and has a recognised structure of its own.

### **3.2 INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AT FACULTY AND SCHOOL LEVEL**

There are different intervention strategies in place in different Faculties aimed at assisting identified 'at risk' students. The Faculty of Education makes use of the Monitoring Chart System which requires students to meet twice each semester with their module tutors, module co-ordinators, and academic counsellors. After each meeting with the student, each staff member comments on the student's progress and signs the chart, ensuring the enforcement of student attendance of meetings with module tutors, module coordinators and academic counsellors.

The Faculty of Engineering provides supplementary instruction, academic consultations, workshops, report writing assistance, English courses for non-English Speakers as well as mentoring. The use of different approaches to assist students allows the Faculty to target several students with diverse areas of need. The Faculty of Law has a well-supported system of identification and counselling of at-risk students, involving the Deputy-Deans, Deans' Assistants and Year Coordinators, based on the University's green-orange-red system. This Faculty focuses on first year modules that involve small-group teaching, extensive modelling of core skills and consistent use of formative feedback. The faculty has also engaged in a SUKAR-funded Academic Support Programme which focussed mainly on the second year students, with some informal support going to first years as well.

In addition to the intervention strategies employed by other Faculties to assist students, the Medical School uses Clinical Mentoring Programmes and Informal Residence Tutoring. The Faculty of Health Sciences offers a variety of support and interventions at School and/or Discipline level on a range of levels from Faculty appointed student mentors, Academic Development Offices in every Discipline and close collaboration and twinning with Student Counselling (Westville Campus).

### **3.3 AVAILABILITY OF ACADEMIC COUNSELLING**

Academic counseling in various forms is available in most Faculties. In the Medical School, academic counseling is provided by ADP to students identified as performing poorly. The ADP coordinator liaises with relevant university resources to ensure that study skills, personal development and academic development related to learning and success strategies are scheduled when possible as formal sessions on the timetable for all students.

In the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, there are joint one-on-one sessions between risk and probation students, the coordinator and Student Counseling. The purpose of this consultation is to evaluate academic performance after test 1 and provide an opportunity to elaborate on their progress and challenges. At these sessions, academic challenges are identified and counselling is provided.

In the Faculty of Management Studies, students identified as 'at risk' or those admitted to the Faculty on probation are required to arrange an interview with staff from the Education Unit, the Dean's Assistants or academics from various schools to get counselling on their learning approaches and curriculum. In this Faculty, the Education Unit is available to offer students academic counseling as well. Students are also active participants in the academic counselling processes and are required to engage in self-evaluation on their studies and study approaches. The Faculty reports that 50% of students attend student group counseling sessions with 10 – 20% attending individual sessions from a total of 1500 students. In the Faculty of Law, all probation students are required to see the Deputy-Dean/ Dean's Assistant as well as the ADC. All first year students on HC campus are assigned a mentor lecturer within the faculty. Risk students deal directly with year coordinators.

The Faculty of Education has flexible consultation times in which students are free to consult module tutors and coordinators at any time during the week without an appointment as opposed to working within a rigid consultation time-tables.

The Faculty of Health Sciences manages and runs a number of internal Faculty orientation initiatives over and above those offered by the University and/or Disciplines. The initiative is intended to ensure that students understand their Faculty better and take advantage of support services rendered to them. All first year students in this Faculty are obliged to attend a compulsory introduction to Academic Development during orientation week.

The Faculty of Law has embedded in the First and Second Year Modules, topics on adaptation to university work, learning styles, time management, note making, academic reading strategies and test techniques. The approach ensures that academic counseling becomes an integral part of teaching and learning in modules.

### **3.4 PERSONAL AND CAREER COUNSELLING INCLUDED IN INTERVENTIONS**

Personal and career counselling is included in interventions in most Faculties. In some Faculties students receive career guidance from academic coordinators, academic development officers and academics. In the faculty of Education, for example, students receive career guidance from an Academic coordinator and Deputy Dean. Students in this Faculty seek career counseling for different reasons including change of curriculum, change of modules and managing workloads.

Some Faculties, such as the Engineering Faculty, offers students personal counseling in areas such as Nutrition. Personal and career counselling is also available to all students in some Faculties through the Student Health Clinics and Psychologists. Students in the different Faculties are also routinely referred for appropriate assistance to specialized units such as the Centre for Student Counselling (CSC) and the Career Counselling and Student Employment Center (CCSEC) or the Student Counselling Center at the Medical school.

It is not apparent from the reports whether the Faculty of Law and Faculty of Science and Agriculture offer personal and career counseling in their interventions as this is not reflected in their reports.

### **3.5 TRACKING OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE**

Faculties track students' performance in various ways. In the Faculty of Education the issue is tackled at Faculty board meetings where students' performance is analysed and students 'at risk' are identified. The Faculty of Engineering has started looking at performance of students who attend the supplementary instruction, tutorials and who consult with the ADOs. The Faculty notes that although

the data from the tracking system cannot be determined to be causal, regular Supplementary Instruction attendees show significantly higher module pass rates and students regularly consulting the ADOs show improved credits over their peers in the same category (RISK, Probation) who do not consult.

In the Faculty of Management Studies, student tracking systems involve discipline academics referring students as a way of tracking students. In this Faculty, probation students submit quarterly reports, attendance logs and self-reflective feedback on good learning practices from the Education Unit and ADOs. This serves as a way of tracking their performance. The Medical School has a tailor-made coding system based on the FAECOM/AECOM system and statistics are discussed at Undergraduate Committee and Faculty Board Meetings.

### **3.6 RECORDS AND RECORD KEEPING**

The keeping of records on academic monitoring and support activities is done differently in different Faculties. In the Faculty of Education, all reports are kept in student's file at Faculty level while in the Faculty of Engineering, the Academic Support and Advancement Programme (ASAP) keeps records of attendance of all interventions and students receive attendance slips from one-on-one consultations as proof of attendance. ASAP reports to Faculty Board are made at each meeting. In the Faculty of Health Sciences, a system for identified "at risk" students to monitor their participation in interventions including ongoing progress reports has been developed in the Faculty.

In the Faculty of Management Studies, students maintain a log of attendance of lectures, tutorials and sessions with academic development officers. However, it is noted in reports that some of the students do not cooperate in submitting attendance logs and reports as and when required. Most Faculties comply with the Senate approved criterion of records and record keeping. It is not clear from the reports, the kind of recording conducted by the Faculty of Law and Faculty of Science and Agriculture.

### **3.7 EVALUATION**

The Faculty of Education has developed research instruments for evaluation of the academic monitoring programme which is currently in process. Academic Development Officers in the Faculty of Engineering undertake a review of supplementary sessions and module lecturers do the same. Students also give their input in the evaluations of the interventions and this feeds back to the Supplementary Instruction leaders. In addition, regular lecture evaluation and peer evaluation are undertaken to evaluate delivery and some schools in this Faculty discuss lecture monitoring within their modules and academic support coordinators also do the same. Faculty Board and Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees discuss feedback from such reviews.

In the Faculty of management Studies, students evaluate counseling/orientation sessions and ADO consultations. ADOS maintain self-reflective evaluations of the support they offer to students. Evaluations and reviews are discussed at EXCO and the Faculty Board.

The Faculty of Health Sciences undertook a mini symposium in 2009, during which ADOs and other staff evaluated their work. The Faculty intends hosting an annual event. In addition, staff members have accessed the Competitive Teaching and Learning Research Grant to conduct evaluation initiatives.

### **3.8 RESOURCES**

Most Faculties have sufficient space from which to operate. However, the Medical School indicates that the issue of space is a major challenge. Faculties such as Engineering and Health Sciences have managed to create and fill positions for the required permanent administrative staff. Financially, some Faculties acknowledge that they do have adequate funding while other Faculties note that they are under-funded regarding staff provisioning and are looking for external funding to continue with programmes.

The Faculty of Education has funding available for up to 18 months and sufficient space, but there is no clearly identified administrative support staff as yet. The Faculty of Engineering reports that funding is scheduled to end in September 2010 as theirs is a DoHET efficiency funded project. The Faculty is under-funded in human resource provisioning and external funding is being sought to continue the ASAP programme.

### **3.9 SUSTAINABLE OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME**

Most of the Faculty reports indicate that academic monitoring and support activities are sustainable, but dependent on the continued availability of funding. In some Faculties such as Engineering and Health Sciences academic development has been entrenched within the disciplines and all academic development officers' posts are permanent, although the posts are funded. Some Faculties are looking for external funding to ensure sustainability.

### **3.10. RESEARCH CARRIED OUT ON THE INTERVENTION / MONITORING**

The academic monitoring and support initiative has prompted academics in some Faculties to explore and undertake areas of publishable research. These include a study on drop outs in Faculty of Engineering and attrition in the Faculty of Management Studies. The Faculty of Health Sciences hosted a mini symposium in addition to acquiring a competitive teaching and learning research grant to research faculty drop-out.

In general, all Faculties do comply with the criterion on research carried out on interventions. Some have already carried out research studies while others have plans in place to undertake research. However, most Faculties identify this criterion as receiving inadequate attention.

### **3.11 STATISTICAL REPORTING**

Most Faculties provided statistical reports for 2009 and very few provided them for 2010. Some reports indicate that data is still being processed by DMI. From the statistical reports submitted, it is clear that a significant number of students have been identified as 'at risk'. For example, in the second semester of 2009, the Faculty of Health Sciences had 618 students in different 'at risk' categories and 106 who dropped out of the Faculty. The Faculty of Law in the second semester of 2009 had 317 students in different 'at risk' categories and 7 who dropped out of the Faculty. One Faculty included in its statistical report the performance of students receiving intervention by way of supplementary instruction when compared to those who were not receiving supplementary instruction, which was useful in shedding light into the effectiveness of intervention measures.

With the exception of the Medical School Most Faculties comply with the criterion on statistical reporting.

#### 4. SUCCESSES IN ACADEMIC MONITORING AND SUPPORT

Based on the Faculty reports, a number of successes may be highlighted in implementing academic monitoring and support. In most Faculties, a Senior Academic has been appointed to coordinate Academic Monitoring and Support activities and most Faculties have measures in place to identify 'at risk' students, and to assist these students with the necessary intervention and support strategies. In some Faculties the process actually begins at registration.

The system of Academic Development Officers (ADO's) who monitor and mentor students in their academic progress is well entrenched in Faculties such as Engineering and Science & Agriculture, Management Studies, and Health Sciences. The support offered by these ADOs to students is multi-faceted ranging from additional tuition and/or modules, academic literacy courses, as well as academic and personal counseling. The kind of support offered in most Faculties emerges out of consultation with the key and relevant stakeholders, including student representatives.

In some Faculties, notably Science and Agriculture and Engineering, academic support has been institutionalised within the Faculty structures. Consequently, at most Faculty and School Meetings, these issues are tabled and interrogated. Academic Monitoring and support measures in most Faculties are student-centered and in some Faculties, students are asked to evaluate their study progress and their performance after a series of intervention measures.

A noteworthy trend is the decision in some Faculties to initiate regular evaluations, reviews and research on support and interventions at Faculty/School levels. The Faculty of Health Sciences hosted a mini symposium in 2009 at which ADOs and other staff presented their work and research findings. The Faculty expects such a symposium to be held annually, as it has generated enormous interest in formally researching academic development initiatives. Similarly, the Faculty of Science and Agriculture has supported a Faculty-wide research project aimed at monitoring, evaluation and responding to students' support needs. Their research study will assist the Faculty to understand the needs of students better, and be able to put appropriate responsive and preventative measures in place so that students can obtain their qualifications in a reasonable time. The Faculty of Engineering, through its research is able to conclude that students receiving supplementary instruction in some courses performed better than those who were not receiving supplementary instruction.

Another positive trend is that Faculties are accessing the Teaching and Learning Competitive Research Grant (TLCRG) to investigate retention, drop-out and the impact of curriculum change on student throughput. Faculties that have accessed the TLCRG include, among others, Health Science's "exploration of student attrition drop out in the faculty of Health Sciences at UKZN"; HDSS's "Assessing Assessment: the disconnect between expectations of learners, undergraduate students and lecturers"; Science and Agriculture's "Statistical assessment of the demographic and academic factors affecting research productivity and student throughput (attritions & retentions) at UKZN" and "The effects of socio-political, cultural, familial & linguistic factors on Faculty of Science and Agriculture's Risk & Probation students". The Faculty of Education is currently undertaking a "Cohort analysis of student dropout and exclusions at UKZN". This report is being keenly anticipated to provide indicators and signposts for further research.

More recently, the Teaching and learning Teaching Innovations and Quality enhancement grant has been launched with the purpose of encouraging creativity, explorations and experimentation with new and different approaches, resources, ideas and improving quality in university teaching and learning.

The grant provides an opportunity for piloting initiatives before they are taken to scale, assisting in introducing and managing change. It is expected that this grant will be increasingly accessed to devise innovative quality monitoring and enhancement models.

## **5. CHALLENGES IN ACADEMIC MONITORING AND SUPPORT**

From the Faculty reports on Academic Monitoring and Support, the following challenges were raised and would need to be addressed to enhance the systems in place and ensure sustainability of the support programmes.

As indicated above, many Faculties rely on ADO's to give effect to the MONITORING AND SUPPORT initiative. Typically, Academic Development units are staffed by temporary personnel and the initiatives are often hampered by a lack of stability and continuity in staffing. Several Faculties expressed the hope that a more permanent support structure in Faculties would be instituted to sustain the programme. An allied problem is that some Faculties do not have the requisite physical space from which to operate, resulting in the "borrowing" of space from other units in the Faculty.

Another challenge that Faculties identified is that of enforcing the mandatory consultations for 'at risk' students and their failure to enforce students' attendance of support programmes. Faculties underscored the necessity to devise a mechanism to enforce the mandatory compliance for the system to be employed successfully.

Faculties also identified the need for closer cooperation between academics in disciplines who refer students for academic support and the academic support coordinators, to ensure proper tracking of all referred students. Early identification of risk cases is seen as necessary and this requires close tracking and monitoring of students progress by considering reports from academics in disciplines as well as from the initial compilation of assignment and test marks. In this regard, regular and timely release of assignment and test marks from Schools is necessary to expedite coordinators evaluation efforts and students' own evaluation.

As indicated in the 2009 Academic and Monitoring and Support report to Senate, one of the limitations of that report was the fact that it was derived from self reports by Faculties, the veracity of which had not been tested. The same can be said for this report, although we are now in a position to state fairly confidently, based on Faculty reports, that a far more systematic approach is being adopted by Faculties to monitoring and support.

Having provided funding assistance to Faculties to coordinate and implement the programme, and having revised the monitoring and support instrument and reporting protocols, the Monitoring and Support initiative, now in its second year of application, needs to be evaluated by QPA in the year ahead, to determine whether the programme is adding value to the institution, and if not, what programmatic interventions are required to fulfill the institution's policy obligation as specified in the Academic Monitoring and Exclusions Policy and Procedures.

## 6. KEY FINDINGS

- Most Faculties have appointed senior academics with administrative assistants to coordinate academic monitoring and support. From their reports, it is evident that Faculties have implemented various intervention and support measures to assist ‘at risk’ students. The intervention and support measures vary from Faculty to Faculty but most include extra tuition/ supplementary instruction, academic literacy courses, academic consultation, workshops, mentoring, and academic, personal and career counseling. Some Faculties offer courses in English Language development to assist second language speakers with the development of the appropriate and expected academic discourse related to the discipline.
- In most Faculties, the interventions are compulsory for all students, but some Faculties indicate difficulties in enforcing mandatory compliance and attendance. It is not clear from some Faculty reports what systems are in place for identified “at risk” students to monitor their own participation. It is also not clear what systems are in place for tracking of students’ performance, and referrals to and from faculty, school and disciplines.
- Most Faculties make extensive use of Academic Development Officers (ADO’s) in their monitoring and support activities. Of concern is the relative “instability” of the support system because it is typically staffed by Academic Development Officers who are on short term contracts. This also impacts on the Faculties’ capacity to enforce mandatory consultations as required of the policy.
- Despite the substantial investment and the institutional support for monitoring and support, the graduation rate has continued to decline from 20% in 2006 to 17% in 2009 with some Faculties experiencing higher dropout and exclusion rates than graduations in some programmes. Currently at 24%, the number of students lost to the university is higher than the graduation rate, prompting questions about the efficacy of the monitoring and support initiative.
- Most Faculties rate the research they carry out on the intervention/monitoring as inadequate and all Faculties indicate that sustainability of the programme is contingent on availability of funding as most of the posts are funded through external grants.
- More empirical studies across Faculties could yield more useful insights on the performance of students after a series of intervention measures compared to those who do not receive interventions. A comparison of individual students’ performance before and after interventions is also necessary as measure for the usefulness of the intervention employed.

## 7. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The monitoring and support initiative evolved organically through a process of consultation by UTLC and Faculties. The emergent outputs have succeeded in placing the issue on the agenda of Faculties. Now that the processes and systems are in place (and in some Faculties, institutionalized), there is scope to

refine the processes and upscale them so that they are more systematic and rigorous in generating the data required to inform coherent institutional responses and to track impact.

The monitoring and support system in its current form is compromised by an apparent lack of stability, largely because of staffing arrangements, and the incapacity to enforce mandatory compliance. It is necessary to devise more sustainable systems, and in particular, staffing arrangements to give the initiative a reasonable chance to succeed.

To this end, research into delivery modes used by Faculties and their effectiveness is important in order to identify strengths and weaknesses and adopt methods successful in some Faculties for use in other Faculties. There is also need for more research into modules with high failure rates across Faculties in order to identify areas of improvement.

Dropout rates continue to be more of a cause for concern compared to exclusion rates. Some Faculties have indicated the need to interact with students who have dropped or opted out of their degree programmes so as to understand better the causes. This mode of enquiry should be encouraged and supported especially in Faculties where more students drop out than graduate. The performance of student cohorts from 2007 should be further explored as the graduation rate tends to be declining and in some Faculties has decreased to levels below the national benchmark.

Since 2009, the university has made substantial funding available to Faculties for monitoring and support, initially from the DOHET Teaching Development Grant valued at R3 million of which R2.6 million was allocated to monitoring and support. This appropriation included R500, 000 to the Executive Dean of Students for student mentoring. In 2010, the DOHET Teaching Development Grant was reduced to R215, 000 prompting the university to compensate by making available R2, 462,875 from the main fund based on individual Faculty proposals to UTLO to sustain the monitoring and support system.

The data generated from Faculty analyses signals the need to ask critical questions of the monitoring and support initiative, notably, whether the investment in Access and first year support is delivering the expected outcomes, and whether the investment would yield better returns if extended to supporting 2<sup>nd</sup> and subsequent years. In this regard, a cost-benefit analysis of existing support would be instructive.

While the current data management and information systems at UKZN is able to provide data on academic dropouts and exclusions, little is known about the impact of financial factors on dropouts and exclusions, and whether the same factors that affect dropout also affect graduation. In addition, a more nuanced understanding is required of the dropout phenomenon. Typically, the existing data focuses on dropout and exclusion from the university or from a particular qualification. As yet, we do not have a clear picture of students' "dropping into" other qualifications within the university.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

While much of the focus has been on academic exclusions and dropout, little is known about the impact of financial factors on dropout and exclusions. It has proved difficult to extract such information from the current university system. Therefore, there is an urgent need to conduct university wide research to obtain a deeper understanding of how financial factors contribute to exclusions and dropouts and to provide resources for supporting programme development within the university system for getting a

handle on this aspect. To this end, ring fenced funding for commissioned studies and system development by university and/or outside specialists is proposed

Both the 2009 and 2010 Academic and Monitoring and Support reports were derived from self-evaluation reports by Faculties, the veracity of which had not been tested. An independent evaluation by QPA is proposed to identify effective interventions and strategies that have yielded greatest successes for wider dissemination of what works in academic monitoring and support as well as flagging areas that require improvement and related action plans.

Funding for academic monitoring has been provided from DOHET Teaching Development Grants which vary from year to year and are especially motivated for by the DVC (Teaching & Learning) according to individual proposals made by Faculties to UTLO. Colleges need to integrate provision for academic monitoring and support into their budgets to ensure that the system is stable, institutionalised and sustainable.

## **PART 2:**

### **9. ANALYSIS OF UNDERGRADUATE COHORTS FROM EACH YEAR OF 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007: GRADUATED, EXCLUDED AND DROPPED OUT**

This part of the report undertakes a cross sectional cohort analysis of the current (2010) status of each cohort in each year from 2004 to 2007. This is in response to a Senate approved recommendation in the last academic monitoring and support report for UTLC to undertake a cohort analysis in order to further interrogate the issue of dropout and exclusion in undergraduate degrees. The purpose of this exercise is to provide deeper insights into the issue of dropout, exclusion and graduation rates. Student academic monitoring and support is considered against continuing challenges to improve retention and throughput rates in undergraduate degrees, hence the need for ongoing analyses of student movement in different cohorts.

The cohort status description and analysis is based on undergraduate student data in mainstream programmes (including those who joined mainstream programmes from access programmes). It has to be noted that the DMI data for each cohort in 3- or 4-year year degrees refers to the current (2010) status of all students who had completed in 2009 in that cohort. That is, the 2004 cohort for 3-year degree programmes for example, refers to the student data for a 6-year period or minimum time +3 years, similarly the 2005 cohort refers to students data for a 5-year period or minimum +2, 2006 cohort refers to minimum +1 year, and 2007 to minimum time.

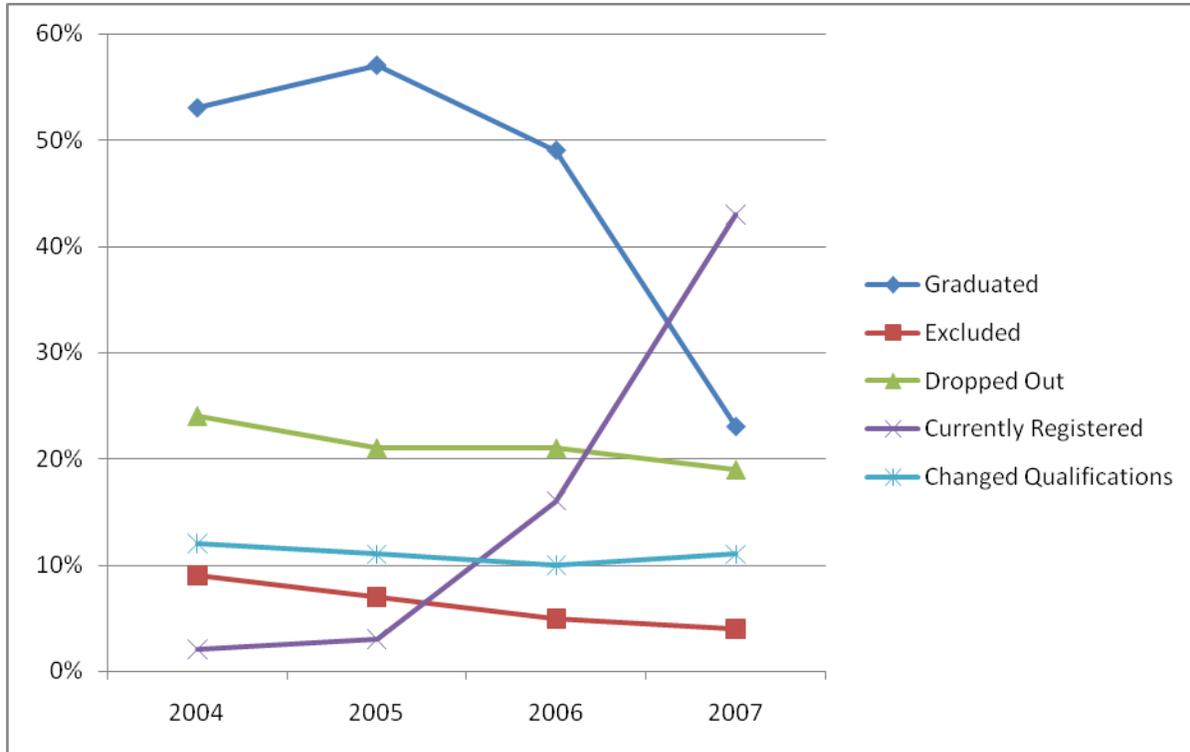
The graduation, exclusion and dropout data are calculated against the number of students registered for each cohort. It should also be observed that 3- and 4-year degree programmes are of significantly different sizes in different faculties (see Appendices). For example Faculty of Science and Agriculture have much larger 3 year degree programmes than 4-year programmes.

#### **This section, therefore aims to:**

- a) analyse graduation, exclusion and dropout rates (which may be referred to as student attrition) against the number who initially registered in different years and may still be in the system.
- b) draw comparisons of different cohorts' performance by Faculty.
- c) assess implications of identified statistical trends to academic monitoring and support efforts in the university.

## 9.1: THREE-Year Academic Degrees

**Figure 1:**  
**University cohort status yearly in 3-Year Academic Degree programmes: 2004 – 2007**



### Total number of registered students:

2004 - 4564

2005 - 2939

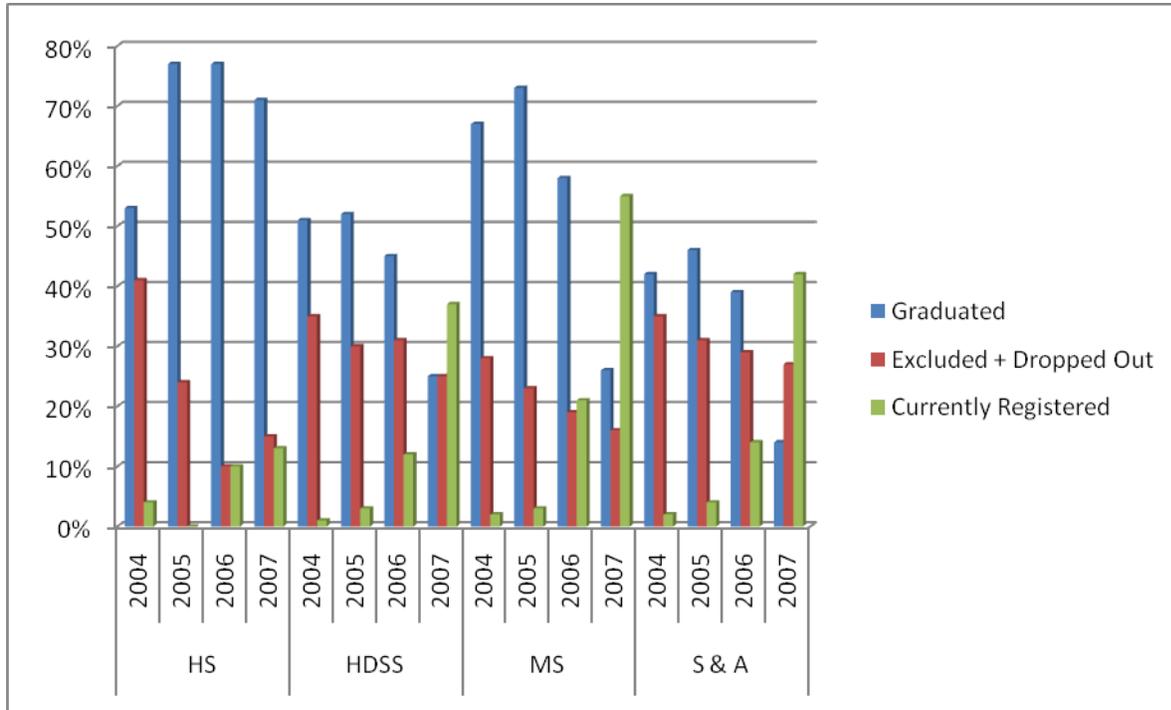
2006 - 3215

2007 - 3470

### Observations:

- After 6 years (or double minimum time), just over half (53%) of the 2004 cohort has graduated
- In 3 years (or minimum time), the 2007 cohort demonstrates that number of students who have dropped out or been excluded is equivalent to the graduation rate at 23% (or 793 students), while 43% are still in the system at a time when they should have completed their studies.
- For cohorts in each year, since 2004, the dropout rate is consistently higher than exclusion rate.
- There is a decrease in both exclusion and dropout rates but more students are still in the system for more recent cohorts
- The reasons for (academic) exclusion are better known, but the causes of dropout are multi-faceted and more difficult to establish.

**Figure 2:**  
**Comparison of the status of 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 Cohorts in 3-Year Academic Degree Programmes**



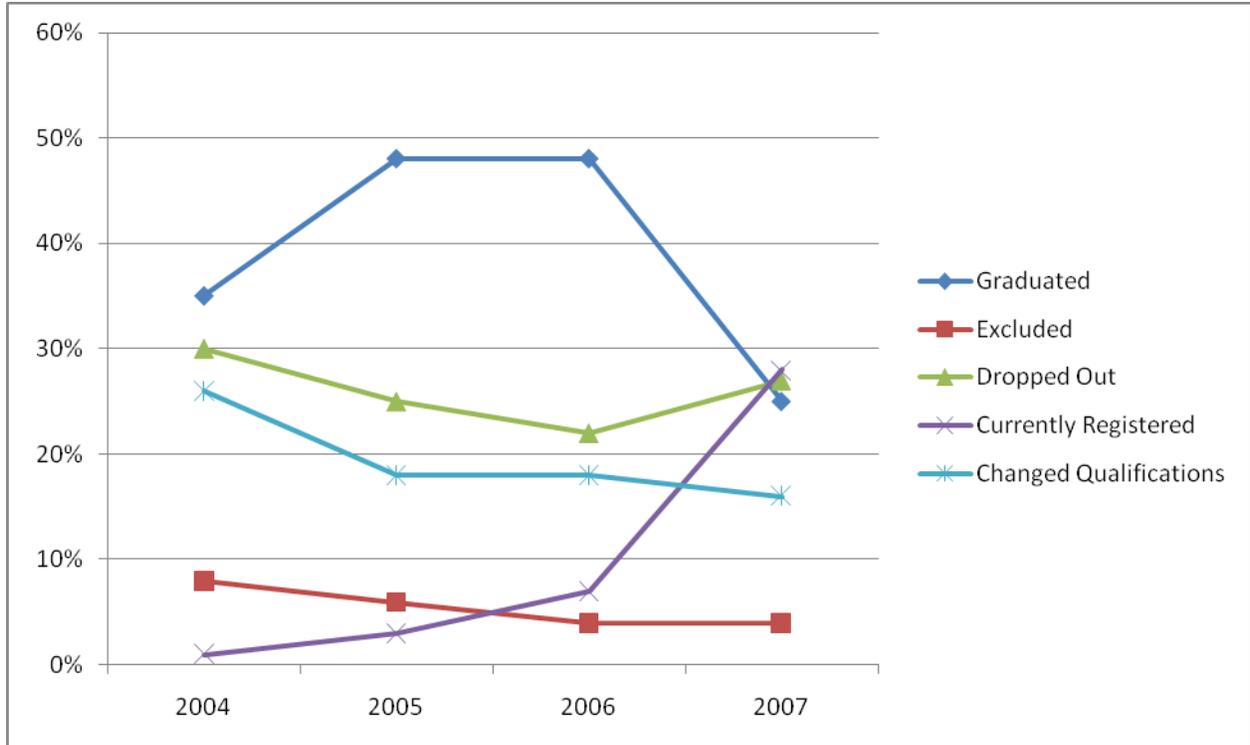
**Observations**

- The Faculties of Health Sciences and Management Studies have relatively high graduation rates in all cohorts when compared to student attrition (i.e. a combination of dropouts and exclusions).
- After 6 years, the 2004 cohorts in the Faculties of Health Sciences, Humanities, Development and Social Sciences and Science and Agriculture have had a high student attrition of over 30%.
- The 2007 cohort of 1000 students in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture had more students who dropped out and were excluded than those who graduated in minimum time. That is, a 14% graduation rate in minimum time compared to 27% student attrition. The cohort also had more students still registered than those who graduated.
- The 2007 cohort of 1390 students in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences had the same rate for student attrition and graduation at 25% with 37% of students still registered.
- The smaller Health Sciences 2007 cohort of 52 students has performed best with a high 71% graduation rate in minimum time.
- The 2007 cohort in the Faculty of Science and Agriculture with a graduation rate of 14% is well below the 2004 adjusted national benchmark of 22.5% (reduced from 25%) for 3 year degree programmes completed in minimum time. In all other Faculties, their 2007 cohort’s graduation

rates are above the benchmark: Health Science at 71%; Humanities Development and Social Sciences at 25% and Management Studies at 26%.

## 9.2: THREE-Year Professional Degrees

**Figure 3:**  
**University cohort status yearly in 3-Year Professional Degree programmes: drop outs and exclusions 2004 – 2007**



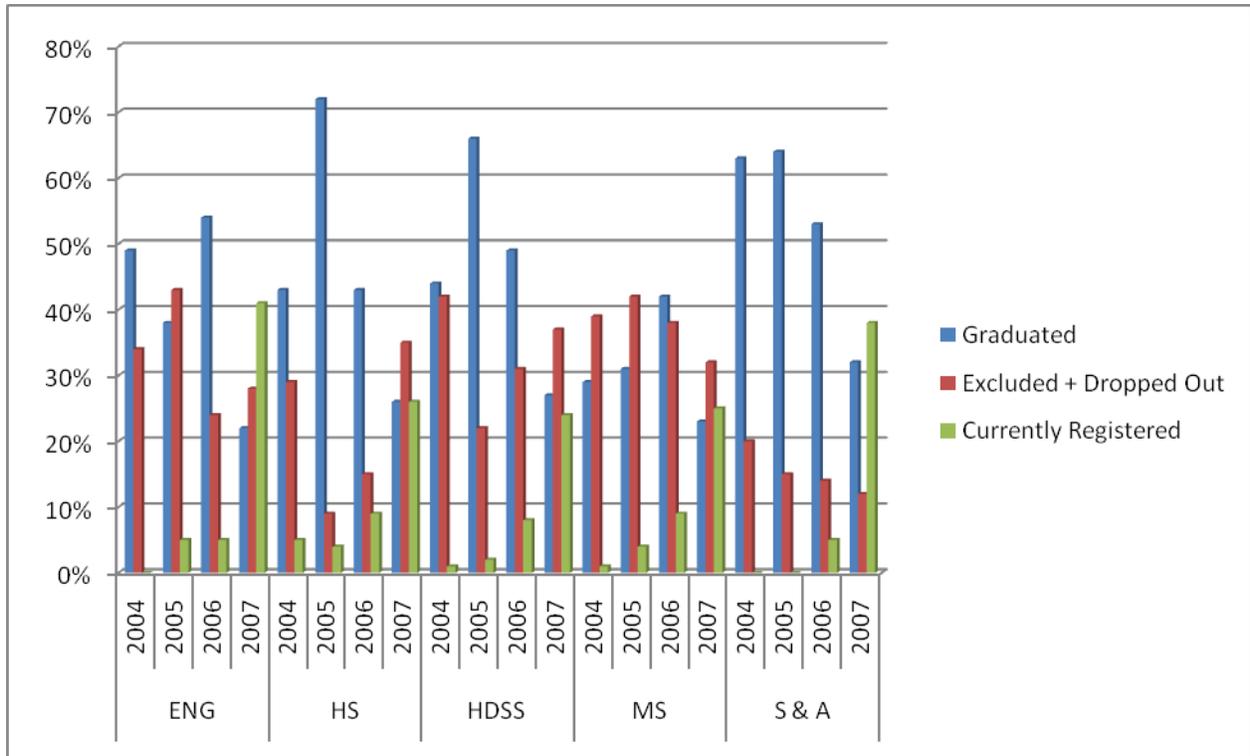
### Total number of registered students:

2004 - 985  
 2005 - 448  
 2006 - 350  
 2007 - 449

### Observations:

- Dropout rates are consistently higher than exclusion rates.
- Dropout rates are a cause for concern as they are always above 20%.
- Whilst both drop out and exclusion rates were on the decrease from their 2004 levels, they seem to be ascending in 2007 signalling a problem.
- Few students are changing qualification in more recent cohorts compared to earlier ones
- After a minimum time of 3 years in the degree, the 2007 cohort has higher student attrition at 31% than graduation which is 25%, with a further 28% or 128 students still registered.

**Figure 4:**  
**Comparison of the status of 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 Cohorts in 3-Year Professional Degree Programmes**

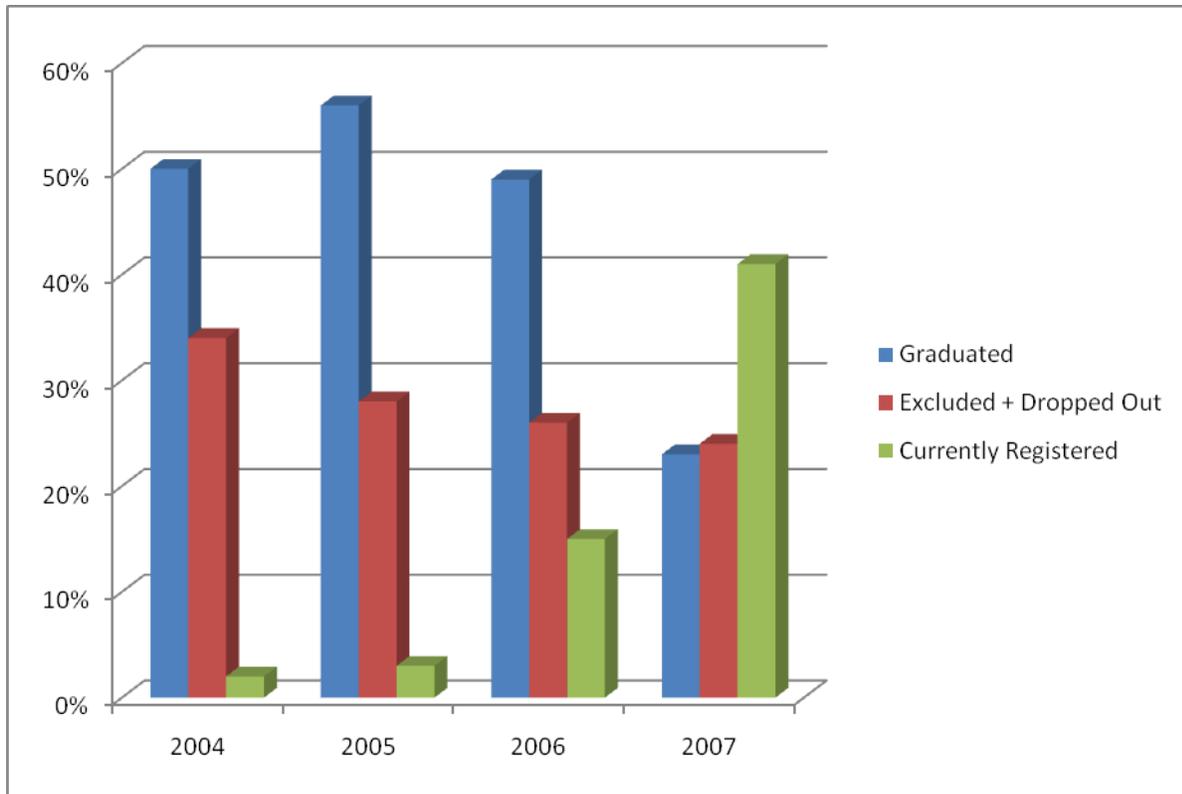


**Observations**

- For the Faculty of Management Studies, student attrition (a combination of dropouts and exclusions) was above 30% for every cohort and exceeded graduation in all except one cohort.
- In some cohorts, student attrition rate reached highs of above 40%: that is, the 2004 cohort in Humanities, Development and Social Sciences and the 2005 cohorts in Management Studies and in Engineering.
- Other cohorts in which student attrition was higher than graduation rates are: the 2005 cohort in Engineering and the 2007 cohorts in the Faculties of Health Sciences, Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, and Management Studies
- Faring much better, the Faculty of Science and Agriculture has high graduation rates for all cohorts and a low steadily declining student attrition for each successive cohort
- On a more positive note, graduation rates for the 2007 cohorts in 3-year degrees in most Faculties were above the revised national benchmark of 22.5% (reduced from 25%) for 3-year degrees completed in minimum time - Health Sciences (26%), Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (27%), Management Studies (23%) and Science and Agriculture (32%). Only Engineering (21.7%) was below the benchmark.

### 9.3: COMBINED 3-YEAR BACHELOR'S DEGREES

**Figure 5:**  
**University cohort in 3-Year Bachelor's Degree programmes: 2004 – 2007**



**Total number of registered students per cohort:**

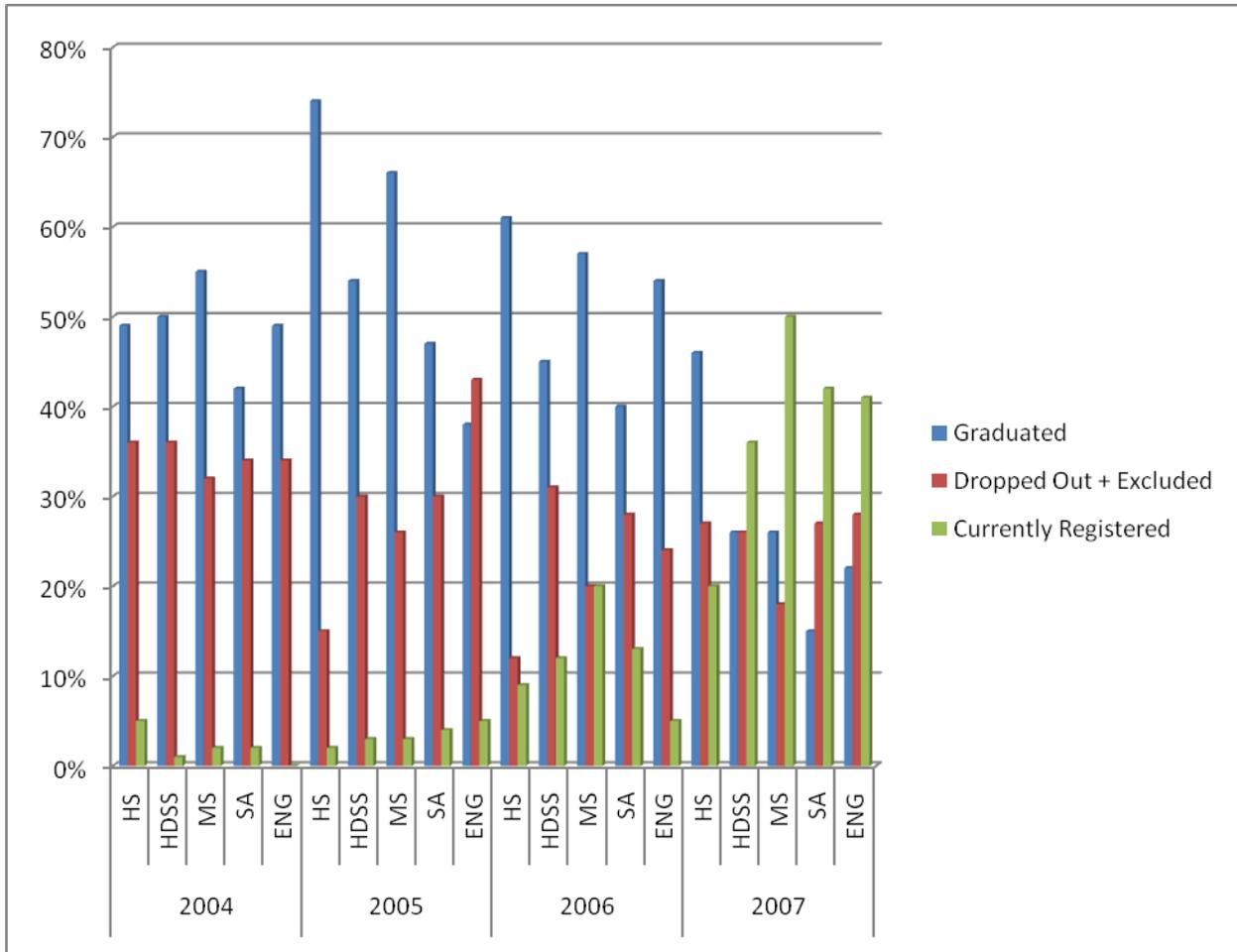
2004 - 5549  
2005 - 3387  
2006 - 3550  
2007 - 3919

**OBSERVATIONS**

- After 6 years in a 3-year Bachelor's degree programme, only 50% of 5549 students had graduated from the 2004 cohort. 34%, or 1887 students had been excluded or dropped out and 2% were still registered.
- More positively, each successive cohort shows a decline in student attrition.
- Students registered for 3-year Bachelor's degree programmes (2006 cohort) had graduated 49% in minimum + 1 year. This figure is well above 36% graduation found in the national 2000 cohort surveyed by the Department of Education (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007:25). However, the same 2006 cohort had a student attrition of 26% after 4 years.
- The 2007 cohort shows the challenge of the university's failure to assist students to complete degree programmes in minimum time. With 41% of the students still registered after 3 years,

the 23% who graduated in minimum time is below student attrition of 24% (940). The university graduation rate of 23% is just above the revised national benchmark of 22.5% for 3-year degrees completed in minimum time (DoE, 2004:9).

**Figure 6:**  
**Comparison of the status of 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 Cohorts in 3-Year Bachelor's Degree Programmes**



**Total number of registered students:**

- 2004 - 5549
- 2005 - 3387
- 2006 - 3550
- 2007 - 3919

**Observations:**

- Student attrition (a combination of dropouts and exclusions) was very high and exceeded graduation in the Faculties of Engineering's 2005 and 2007 cohorts and Science and Agriculture's 2007 cohort.

- The high rate of currently registered students of the 2007 cohort after minimum time in almost every Faculty is evidence of the university’s failure to assist the majority of students to complete their programmes in 3 years.
- However, student attrition in 2007 appears to have improved since 2004 which was consistently above 30% for all faculties

**Table 1: Students’ movement pattern after 5 years in 3-year Bachelor’s degrees at UKZN**

<b>2005 Cohort Faculty</b>	<b>Graduated in 5 years</b>	<b>Still registered after 5 years</b>	<b>Student Attrition</b>	<b>Changed Qualifications</b>
Health Sciences	74%	2%	15%	8%
Human Development and Social Sciences	54%	3%	30%	14%
Management Studies	66%	3%	26%	5%
Science and Agriculture	47%	4%	30%	19%
Engineering	38%	5%	43%	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>12%</b>

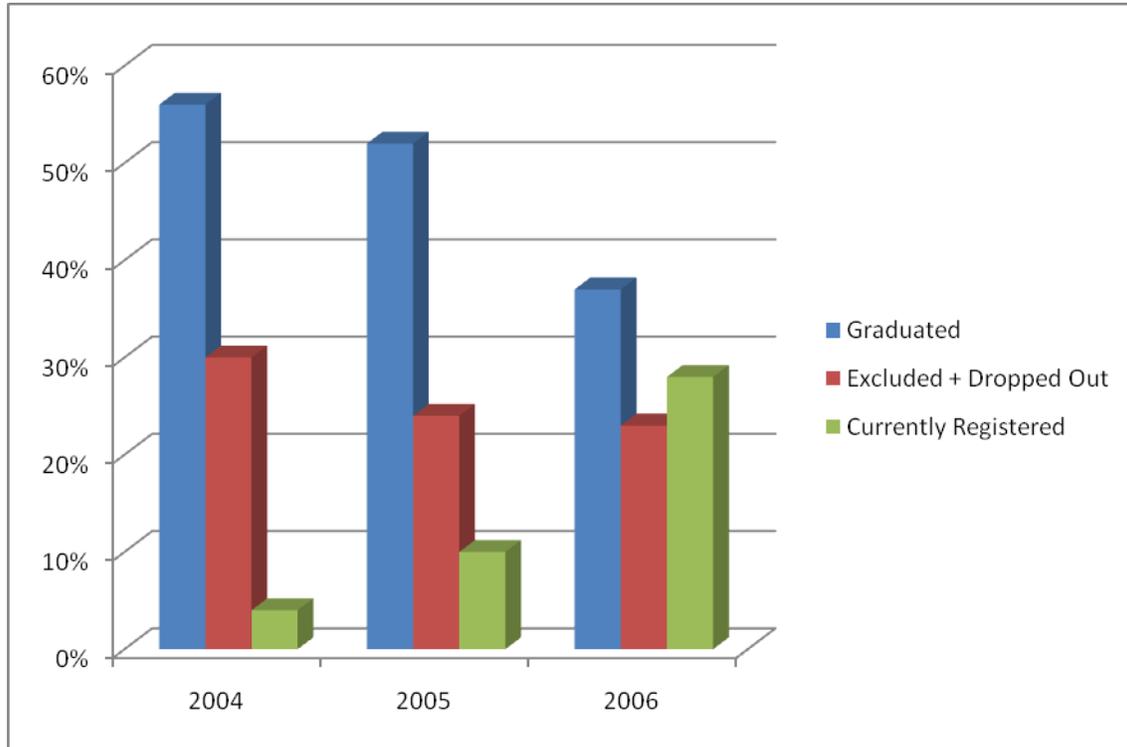
Total Number in 2005 cohort – 3387

The DOE study of the 2000 national cohort (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007), after 5 years showed that only 50% of first time entering students into (contact) universities had graduated and 38% had left their original institutions. At 56% graduated after 5 years, UKZN is above this figure for its 3 year degrees. Also, its student attrition at 28%, though high, is less than the DOE figures.

The Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science graduation rate after 5 years of 54% is slightly higher than the 2000 national cohort in the DoE study which is 53%. The Faculty of Management Studies which is roughly equivalent to the Business/Management classification in the 2000 national cohort in the DoE study has a higher graduation rate after 5 years at 66%. This is compared to 50% for the Business/Management classification in the 2000 national cohort (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007).

## 9.4: FOUR-YEAR PROFESSIONAL DEGREES

**Figure 7:**  
**University cohort status yearly in 4-Year Professional Degree programmes: drop outs and exclusions 2004 – 2006**



### **Total number of registered students per cohort:**

2004 - 1908

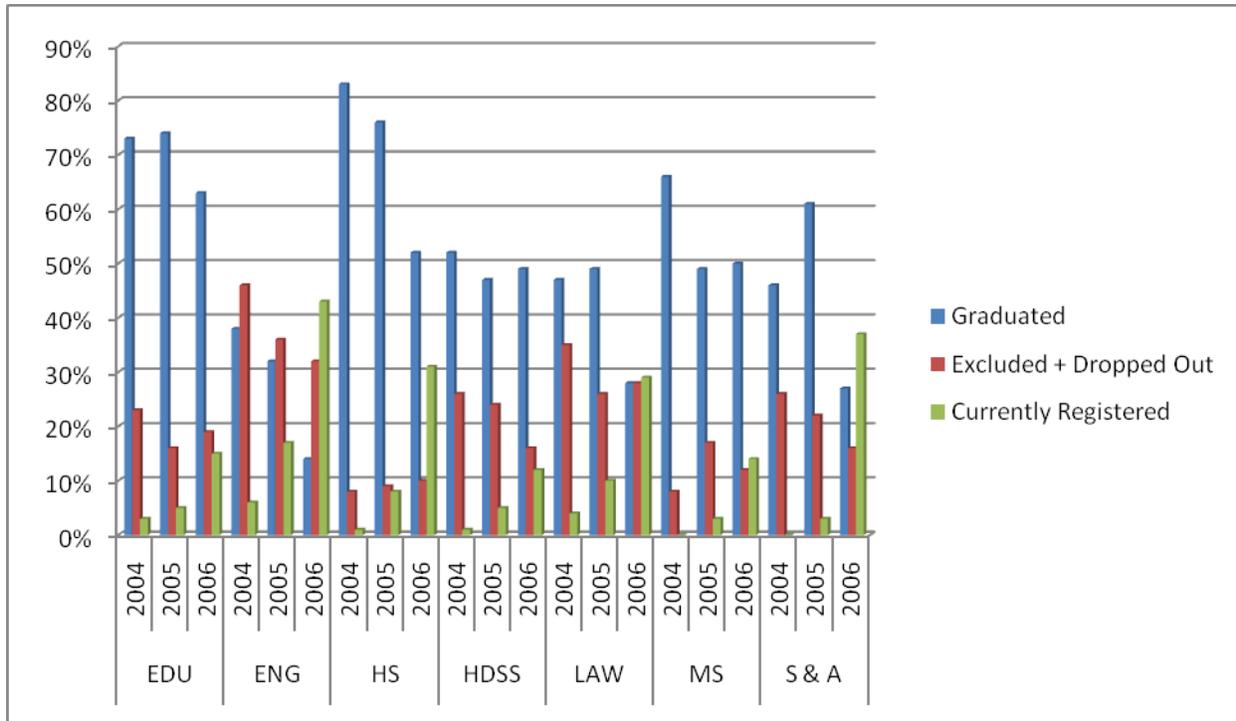
2005 - 1739

2006 – 1478

### **OBSERVATIONS FROM THIS BAR GRAPH**

- After 6 years, only 56% of 1908 students had graduated from the 4-year Professional degree programmes, 30% (or 840) of the students were either excluded or dropped out and 4% are still registered.
- The 2005 cohort shows that 52% of the students had graduated after 5 years and 24% had been lost while 10% were still registered after 5 years and had not graduated after minimum plus one year.
- Only 37% of the 1478 students registered for 4-year Professional degree programmes in the 2006 cohort graduated in minimum time whilst 28% were still registered and 23% were lost to the university. Currently registered students and student attrition taken together, outnumber those who graduated, suggesting a serious throughput and completion problem.

**Figure 8:**  
**Comparison of the status of 2004, 2005, and 2006 Cohorts in 4-Year Professional Degree Programmes**



**Observations:**

- The Faculties of Education, Health Sciences and Management Studies have had relatively high graduation rates compared to student attrition rate.
- In all the cohorts from 2004 to 2006, the Faculty of Engineering has had higher student attrition than graduation rates. The 2006 cohort, after 4 years minimum time, had an attrition rate of 32%, more than double its graduation rate of 14%.
- Not only the cohorts in the Faculty of Engineering, but also the 2004 cohort in the Faculty of Law, have had high student attrition rates of more than 30%. Student graduation and attrition rates are the same high of 28% for the 2006 cohort in the Faculty of Law.
- Faculties of Science & Agriculture and Humanities, Development and Social Science show a steady decline in student attrition for successive cohorts from 2004 to 2007.
- It is important to note that graduation rates in minimum time of 4 years in the Faculty of Education (63%), Health Sciences (52%), Humanities Development and Social Sciences (49%), Law (28%), Science and Agriculture (27%) and Management Studies (50%) are far higher than the revised national benchmark for 4-year degree programmes completed in minimum time which stands at 18% (DoE, 2004) (decreased from 20%). Only the Faculty of Engineering whose graduation rate is 14% is below the revised benchmark.

**Table 2: Students' movement pattern after 5 years in 4-year Professional degrees at UKZN**

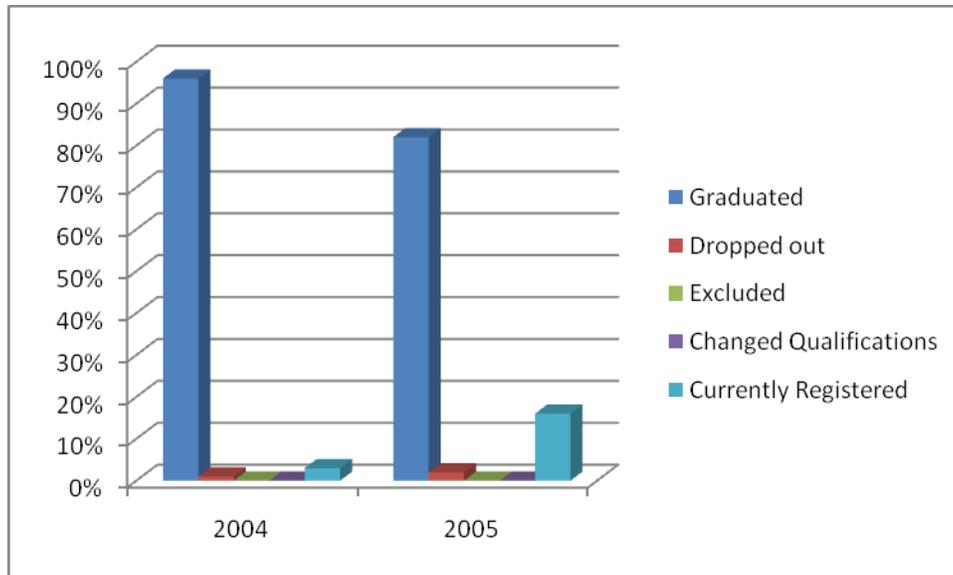
<b>2005 COHORT Faculty</b>	<b>No Registered</b>	<b>Graduated in 5 years</b>	<b>Still registered after 5 years</b>	<b>Student Attrition</b>	<b>Changed Qualifications</b>
Education	417	74%	5%	16%	5%
Engineering	587	32%	17%	36%	16%
Health Sciences	148	76%	8%	9%	7%
Humanities Development and Social Sciences	73	47%	5%	24%	23%
Law	353	49%	10%	26%	15%
Management Studies	130	49%	3%	17%	31%
Science & Agriculture	31	61%	3%	22%	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1739</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>14%</b>

**Observations:**

- Education, Science & Agriculture and Health Sciences have high graduation rates of more than 60% in their 4 year degrees after 5 years.
- The Faculty of Engineering's graduation rate of 32% in 5 years is well below the 2000 national cohort in the DoE study which is 54% (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007:13)
- The Faculty of Law's graduation rate of 49% in 5 years is higher than the 2000 national cohort in the DoE study of 31% (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007:13)
- Engineering and Law have 17% and 10% students still registered after 5 years respectively compared to the DOE 2000 cohort study which had 19% and 15% respectively (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007:13).
- Graduation rates in professional 4 year degrees in Business/Management in the DOE 2000 cohort are reflected as 60% after 5 years compared to the lower Faculty of Management Studies graduation rates of 49% (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007:13)
- Student attrition after 5 years in 4 year professional degrees are 24% which is at the low end of the range of 25-64% presented in the DOE study. Graduation rates in professional 4 year degrees in Business/Management in the DOE 2000 cohort are reflected as 60% after 5 years compared to the lower Faculty of Management Studies graduation rates of 49% (Scott, Yeld & Hendry, 2007:13)

## 9.5: FIVE-YEAR SCHOOL OF MEDICINE'S MBCHB DEGREE

**Figure 9:**  
**Comparison of the status of 2004 and 2005 Cohorts in 5-Year MBCHB Degree Programme**



**Total number of registered students:**

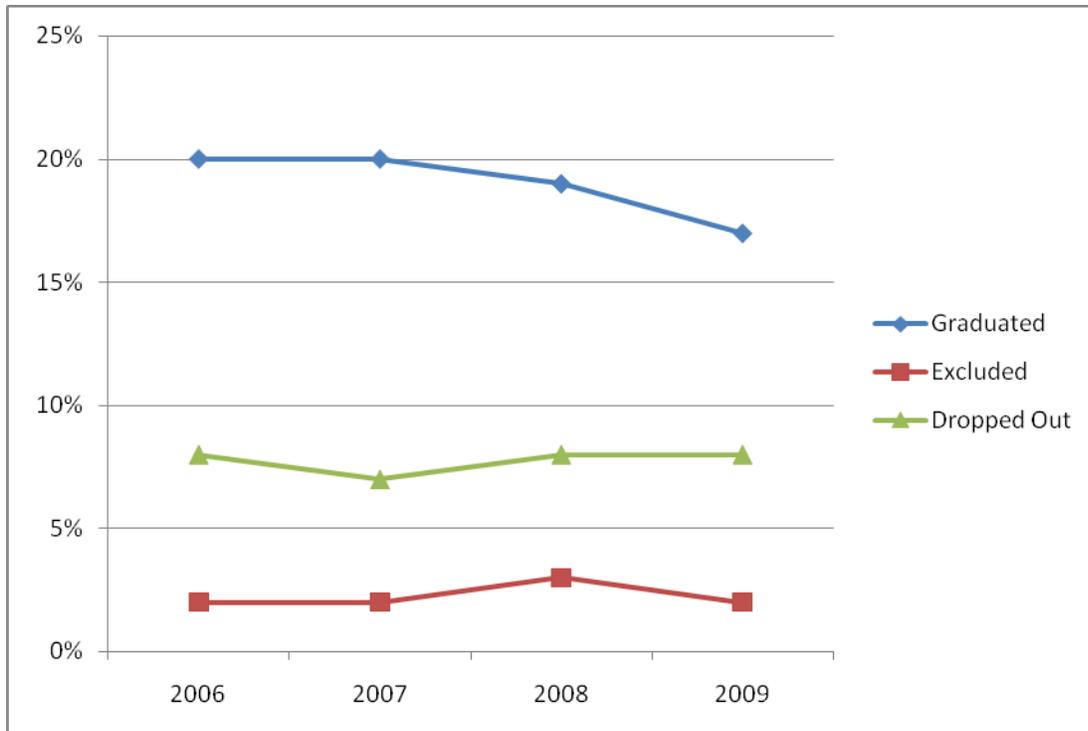
2004 - 157  
2005 - 174  
2006 - 164

Observations that can be made from the cohorts in medical degrees are as follows:

- Graduation rates are high at 96% for the 2004 cohort which refers to students who completed in minimum +1 years.
- The 2005 cohort shows that 82% of students completed in minimum time with 16% of the students still registered.
- Dropout rates are low in medical degrees at 2% and 4% for the 2004 and 2005 cohorts respectively.
- Students do not change qualifications once they register for the degree.

## 9.6 UNDERGRADUATE YEAR BY YEAR ANALYSIS (2006 – 2008)

**Figure 10:**  
**UKZN Undergraduate Degrees: Registrations, Graduates, Exclusions & Drop outs (Headcount)**



Data on headcount of all registered undergraduate students in each year from 2006 to 2009 in the university shows that:

- There is a noticeable decrease in graduation rates from 20% in 2006 to 17% in 2009.
- Dropout rates are consistently higher than exclusion rates.
- Dropout rates have settled at 8% for 2008 and 2009.
- Having increased slightly in 2008, exclusion rates have remained low at 2%

### 10. KEY FINDINGS

1. Student head counts shows that undergraduate graduation rates are on the decrease suggesting that academic monitoring and support efforts in the university may not be yielding the desired results.
2. Student dropout rate is a more serious challenge than student exclusion. While causes of (academic) exclusion are better known, the issues of dropout needs further interrogation to fully understand the causes and possible solutions.
3. A crucial challenge for the university is to have more students complete their degree programmes in minimum time. Many students remain registered long after they should have completed their studies having serious funding and resource implications for the university.

4. Some programmes in some Faculties in the university experience higher rates of student attrition rates than graduations.

## 11. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The comparison of each cohort by Faculty in 3- and 4-year degree programmes shows that the main challenge is that of supporting more students to complete their degree programmes in minimum time. The situation is compounded when more students are lost to the university than those who graduate, indicating the need to interrogate academic monitoring and support activities and the need to have such programmes evaluated for their effectiveness in order to ensure that many more students in Faculties remain on the graduation path.

Data from the cohort analysis and the year by year analysis of student drop out and exclusions show that these are challenges that require continuous attention, particularly since despite the financial investment and institutional support provided for monitoring and support systems, the graduation rate has continued to decline from 20% in 2006 to 17% in 2009 with some programmes in some Faculties experiencing higher dropout and exclusion rates than graduations. While student exclusion is on the decrease, student dropout is not. An analysis of different cohorts using graduation, drop out and exclusion data on mainstream students underscores the poor retention, throughput and completion rates. The 2007 cohort in 3-year Bachelors Degrees indicate students' failure to complete degree programmes in minimum time. 41% of the students are still registered after the minimum time compared to 23% who graduated in the minimum time. Currently at 24%, the number of students lost to the university is higher than the graduation rate. The 2006 cohort in 4-year Professional degrees shows that 37% of students registered for 4-year Professional degree programmes had graduated, whilst 28% were still registered and 23% were lost to the university.

The need for ongoing academic monitoring and support in various forms cannot be overemphasised if student retention, throughput and completion are to be improved. Empirical studies need to be carried out to explore further and act better on the evidence, especially in certain programmes where between a third to almost a half of the students fall out of the system and do not graduate.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: National Graduation Benchmarks

Qualification Type	Graduation rate (contact)		Graduation rate (distance)	
	National Plan 2001	Adjusted 2004	National Plan 2001	Adjusted 2004
Up to 3 years undergraduate	25%	22.5%	15%	13.5%
4 years or more undergraduate	20%	18%	10%	9%
Postgraduate up to honours	60%	54%	30%	27%
Masters	33%	30%	25%	22.5%
Doctoral	20%	Not specified	20%	Not specified

Source: Department of Education (2001 p20; 2004 p9)

**Appendix 2: DMI Data on UKZN Undergraduate Mainstream students: graduation, dropout and exclusion rates**

**KEY**

Qualification Code	Explanation
3	- 3-Year Academic Degree Programmes
33	- 3-Year Professional Degree Programmes
4	- 4-Year Professional Degree Programmes

QualType	Year	Faculty	Registered	Grad	%Grad	Excl	%Excl	Changed Qual	%ChangedQual	Dropped out	%Dropped out	CurrReg	%CurrReg
3	2004	HEALTH SCIENCES	75	40	53%	1	1%	1	1%	30	40%	3	4%
		HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCI	1793	910	51%	151	8%	220	12%	487	27%	25	1%
		MANAGEMENT STUDIES	1458	972	67%	85	6%	50	3%	319	22%	32	2%
		SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE	1238	515	42%	169	14%	276	22%	258	21%	20	2%
	2004 Total		4564	2437	53%	406	9%	547	12%	1094	24%	80	2%
	2005	HEALTH SCIENCES	39	30	77%	1	3%	0	0%	8	21%	0	0%
		HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCI	1071	560	52%	78	7%	149	14%	247	23%	37	3%
		MANAGEMENT STUDIES	970	704	73%	34	4%	20	2%	183	19%	29	3%
		SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE	859	394	46%	98	11%	165	19%	169	20%	33	4%
	2005 Total		2939	1688	57%	211	7%	334	11%	607	21%	99	3%
	2006	HEALTH SCIENCES	52	40	77%	2	4%	2	4%	3	6%	5	10%
		HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCI	1349	608	45%	66	5%	159	12%	350	26%	166	12%
MANAGEMENT STUDIES		1117	647	58%	31	3%	24	2%	179	16%	236	21%	
NRM SCHOOL OF MEDICINE		15	0	0%	0	0%	12	80%	3	20%	0	0%	
SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE		682	265	39%	63	9%	122	18%	136	20%	96	14%	
2006 Total		3215	1560	49%	162	5%	319	10%	671	21%	503	16%	
2007	HEALTH SCIENCES	52	37	71%	0	0%	0	0%	8	15%	7	13%	
	HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCI	1390	353	25%	46	3%	182	13%	300	22%	509	37%	
	MANAGEMENT STUDIES	1028	269	26%	13	1%	28	3%	155	15%	563	55%	
	SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE	1000	143	14%	84	8%	165	17%	190	19%	418	42%	
2007 Total		3470	802	23%	143	4%	375	11%	653	19%	1497	43%	
Grand Total		14188	6487	46%	922	6%	1575	11%	3025	21%	2179	15%	

**Note:**

1. \* Bachelor of Medical Science

QualType	Year	Faculty	Registered	Grad	%Grad	Excl	%Excl	Changed Qual	%ChangedQual	Dropped out	%Dropped out	CurrReg	%CurrReg
33	2004	ENGINEERING	41	20	49%	12	29%	7	17%	2	5%	0	0%
		HEALTH SCIENCES	56	24	43%	2	4%	13	23%	14	25%	3	5%
		HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCI	158	69	44%	18	11%	20	13%	49	31%	2	1%
		MANAGEMENT STUDIES	684	198	29%	43	6%	206	30%	229	33%	8	1%
	SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE	46	29	63%	3	7%	8	17%	6	13%	0	0%	
	2004 Total		985	340	35%	78	8%	254	26%	300	30%	13	1%
	2005	ENGINEERING	56	21	38%	11	20%	8	14%	13	23%	3	5%
		HEALTH SCIENCES	46	33	72%	0	0%	7	15%	4	9%	2	4%
		HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCI	112	74	66%	2	2%	12	11%	22	20%	2	2%
		MANAGEMENT STUDIES	195	61	31%	13	7%	44	23%	69	35%	8	4%
	SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE	39	25	64%	0	0%	8	21%	6	15%	0	0%	
	2005 Total		448	214	48%	26	6%	79	18%	114	25%	15	3%
2006	ENGINEERING	57	31	54%	7	12%	9	16%	7	12%	3	5%	
	HEALTH SCIENCES	47	20	43%	2	4%	16	34%	5	11%	4	9%	
	HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCI	107	52	49%	3	3%	13	12%	30	28%	9	8%	
	MANAGEMENT STUDIES	79	33	42%	2	3%	9	11%	28	35%	7	9%	
	SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE	60	32	53%	1	2%	17	28%	7	12%	3	5%	
2006 Total		350	168	48%	15	4%	64	18%	77	22%	26	7%	
2007	ENGINEERING	46	10	22%	6	13%	4	9%	7	15%	19	41%	
	HEALTH SCIENCES	66	17	26%	3	5%	9	14%	20	30%	17	26%	
	HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCI	108	29	27%	2	2%	13	12%	38	35%	26	24%	
	MANAGEMENT STUDIES	179	42	23%	4	2%	36	20%	53	30%	44	25%	
	SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE	50	16	32%	1	2%	9	18%	5	10%	19	38%	
2007 Total		449	114	25%	16	4%	71	16%	123	27%	125	28%	
Grand Total		2232	836	37%	135	6%	468	21%	614	28%	179	8%	

QualType	Year	Faculty	Registered	Grad	%Grad	Excl	%Excl	Changed Qual	%ChangedQual	Dropped out	%Dropped out	CurrReg	%CurrReg
4	2004	EDUCATION	562	411	73%			8	1%	118	21%	16	3%
		ENGINEERING	618	232	38%	142	23%	63	10%	145	23%	36	6%
		HEALTH SCIENCES	155	129	83%	2	1%	11	7%	11	7%	2	1%
		HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCI	104	54	52%	2	2%	22	21%	25	24%	1	1%
		LAW	335	158	47%	39	12%	46	14%	77	23%	15	4%
		MANAGEMENT STUDIES	110	73	66%	0	0%	28	25%	9	8%	0	0%
	SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE	24	11	46%	3	13%	7	29%	3	13%	0	0%	
	2004 Total		1908	1068	56%	197	10%	185	10%	388	20%	70	4%
	2005	EDUCATION	417	308	74%	5	1%	21	5%	63	15%	20	5%
		ENGINEERING	587	187	32%	80	14%	92	16%	129	22%	99	17%
		HEALTH SCIENCES	148	113	76%	4	3%	10	7%	9	6%	12	8%
		HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCI	73	34	47%	4	5%	17	23%	14	19%	4	5%
LAW		353	173	49%	26	7%	53	15%	67	19%	34	10%	
MANAGEMENT STUDIES		130	64	49%	6	5%	40	31%	16	12%	4	3%	
SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE	31	19	61%	1	3%	4	13%	6	19%	1	3%		
2005 Total		1739	898	52%	126	7%	237	14%	304	17%	174	10%	
2006	EDUCATION	377	236	63%	5	1%	12	3%	69	18%	55	15%	
	ENGINEERING	454	62	14%	57	13%	56	12%	84	19%	195	43%	
	HEALTH SCIENCES	163	84	52%	4	2%	11	7%	13	8%	51	31%	
	HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCI	73	36	49%	0	0%	16	22%	12	16%	9	12%	
	LAW	309	85	28%	13	4%	48	16%	74	24%	89	29%	
	MANAGEMENT STUDIES	72	36	50%	1	1%	17	24%	8	11%	10	14%	
SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE	30	8	27%	1	3%	6	20%	4	13%	11	37%		
2006 Total		1478	547	37%	81	5%	166	11%	264	18%	420	28%	
Grand Total		5125	2513	49%	404	8%	588	11%	956	19%	664	13%	

**Notes:**

1. NRM School Of Medicine qualifications are excluded.
2. Bachelor of Practical Music (Jazz and Popular Music) is excluded.

QualType	Year	Faculty	Registered	Grad	%Grad	Excl	%Excl	Changed Qual	%ChangedQual	Dropped out	%Dropped out	CurrReg	%CurrReg
4	2004	NRM SCHOOL OF MEDICINE	157	150	96%	0	0%	0	0%	2	1%	5	3%
	2005	NRM SCHOOL OF MEDICINE	174	142	82%	0	0%	0	0%	4	2%	28	16%
	2006	NRM SCHOOL OF MEDICINE	164	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	9	5%	154	94%
Grand Total			495	292	59%	1	0%	0	0%	15	3%	187	38%

### Appendix 3: DMI Data on UKZN Undergraduate Degrees: Registrations, Graduates, Exclusions & Drop outs (Headcount)

UKZN UG Degrees: Registrations, Graduates, Exclusions & Dropouts (Headcount) 2006 - 2009														
Faculty	Yr	Registered	Graduated		Initial Exclusion		Excl & Readmitted		Excl & not Readmitted		Dropout		Excluded + Dropout	
			Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
SCIENCE & AGRICULTURE	2006	3164	658	21%	197	6%	99	3%	98	3%	223	7%	321	10%
	2007	3178	652	21%	305	10%	186	6%	119	4%	195	6%	314	10%
	2008	3138	586	19%	204	7%	105	3%	99	3%	290	9%	389	12%
	2009	3676	525	14%	180	5%	90	2%	90	2%	340	9%	430	12%
<b>SCIENCE &amp; AGRICULTURE TOTAL</b>		<b>13156</b>	<b>2421</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1048</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>1454</b>	<b>11%</b>
ENGINEERING	2006	2502	293	12%	557	22%	414	17%	143	6%	187	7%	330	13%
	2007	2327	305	13%	432	19%	321	14%	111	5%	118	5%	229	10%
	2008	2353	328	14%	336	14%	182	8%	154	7%	166	7%	320	14%
	2009	2253	357	16%	227	10%	98	4%	129	6%	134	6%	263	12%
<b>ENGINEERING TOTAL</b>		<b>9435</b>	<b>1283</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>1552</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>1015</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>1142</b>	<b>12%</b>
EDUCATION	2006	1786	341	19%	11	1%	1	0%	10	1%	104	6%	114	6%
	2007	1743	378	22%	6	0%	4	0%	2	0%	106	6%	108	6%
	2008	1801	375	21%	5	0%	0	0%	5	0%	85	5%	90	5%
	2009	2044	323	16%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	92	5%	92	5%
<b>EDUCATION TOTAL</b>		<b>7374</b>	<b>1417</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>5%</b>
HUMANITIES, DEV & SOC SCIENCES	2006	5722	1303	23%	188	3%	99	2%	89	2%	557	10%	646	11%
	2007	5537	1064	19%	219	4%	132	2%	87	2%	528	10%	615	11%
	2008	5560	1039	19%	214	4%	89	2%	125	2%	568	10%	693	12%
	2009	6012	1068	18%	158	3%	80	1%	78	1%	628	10%	706	12%
<b>HUMANITIES, DEV &amp; SOC SCIENCES TOTAL</b>		<b>22831</b>	<b>4474</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>779</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2281</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>2660</b>	<b>12%</b>
LAW	2006	1775	332	19%	72	4%	42	2%	30	2%	132	7%	162	9%
	2007	1587	253	16%	104	7%	67	4%	37	2%	150	9%	187	12%
	2008	1478	289	20%	51	3%	32	2%	19	1%	141	10%	160	11%
	2009	1590	274	17%	59	4%	33	2%	26	2%	145	9%	171	11%
<b>LAW TOTAL</b>		<b>6430</b>	<b>1148</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>11%</b>
MANAGEMENT STUDIES	2006	6580	1406	21%	304	5%	187	3%	117	2%	567	9%	684	10%
	2007	5828	1362	23%	190	3%	125	2%	65	1%	482	8%	547	9%
	2008	5505	1171	21%	386	7%	187	3%	199	4%	516	9%	715	13%
	2009	5550	1039	19%	244	4%	133	2%	111	2%	411	7%	522	9%
<b>MANAGEMENT STUDIES TOTAL</b>		<b>23463</b>	<b>4978</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>1124</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1976</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>2468</b>	<b>11%</b>
HEALTH SCIENCES	2006	1431	309	22%	38	3%	26	2%	12	1%	59	4%	71	5%
	2007	1426	302	21%	66	5%	42	3%	24	2%	42	3%	66	5%
	2008	1488	295	20%	58	4%	42	3%	16	1%	73	5%	89	6%
	2009	1581	289	18%	37	2%	29	2%	8	1%	93	6%	101	6%
<b>HEALTH SCIENCES TOTAL</b>		<b>5926</b>	<b>1195</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>6%</b>
NRM SCHOOL OF MEDICINE	2006	1100	202	18%	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	13	1%	13	1%
	2007	1068	189	18%	3	0%	2	0%	1	0%	7	1%	8	1%
	2008	1083	223	21%	6	1%	2	0%	4	0%	19	2%	23	2%
	2009	1085	174	16%	30	3%	24	2%	6	1%	22	2%	28	3%
<b>NRM SCHOOL OF MEDICINE TOTAL</b>		<b>4336</b>	<b>788</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>2006 TOTAL</b>		<b>24060</b>	<b>4844</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>1368</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>869</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1842</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>2341</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>2007 TOTAL</b>		<b>22694</b>	<b>4505</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>1325</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1628</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>2074</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>2008 TOTAL</b>		<b>22406</b>	<b>4306</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>1260</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>639</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1858</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>2479</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>2009 TOTAL</b>		<b>23791</b>	<b>4049</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>1865</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>2313</b>	<b>10%</b>

**Notes**

1. Figures reflect Undergraduate Bachelors Degrees(3 Year) and Undergraduate Professional degrees(3 & 4 Year).
2. Registration figures are as at census date.
3. Graduates have graduated for the same approved qualification for reporting year (year of enrolment)
4. Exclusions are academic exclusions only. Where a student has been excluded/readmitted more than once per year, the student is reported only once (unduplicated heads) against the latest codes. Initial exclusion refers to students given an exclusion code, that is, before any process.
5. Dropout reports students who did not graduate for the same approved qualification, were not excluded, and did not register in the subsequent years.
6. The 'Excluded + Dropouts' column refers to students 'lost' to the university.