
6TH ACADEMIC AND
MONITORING SUPPORT
RESEARCH COLLOQUIM
HOSTED BY THE COLLEGE
OF LAW AND
MANAGEMENT STUDIES

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Opening Remarks by Prof B McArthur: Host of the AMS Colloquium and Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the College of Law and Management Studies (CLMS).

INTRODUCTION

The 6th Academic Monitoring and Support Research Colloquium was held on the 28th of November 2018 and was attended by 127 delegates from four institutions, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban University of Technology, Mangosuthu University of Technology and the University of Zululand. The aim of the colloquium was to share evidence-based practices of academic support that have been operational across universities in the KZN province. The colloquium provided an opportunity to:

- Discuss and unpack the effect of AMS programmes on students' learning and development.
- Explore and share AMS experiences and best practices from four higher education institutions in KZN (UKZN, UNIZULU, DUT, and MUT).

Papers focusing on the following topics, were invited.

1. Quantitative evaluations of AMS programmes (including uptake)
2. Cohort analysis of the effect of AMS on student outcomes (retention, dropout, graduation)
3. Qualitative papers on students' experiences of AMS (including student satisfaction with the programmes)
4. College/Department Self-evaluations of AMS programmes

THE PROGRAMME



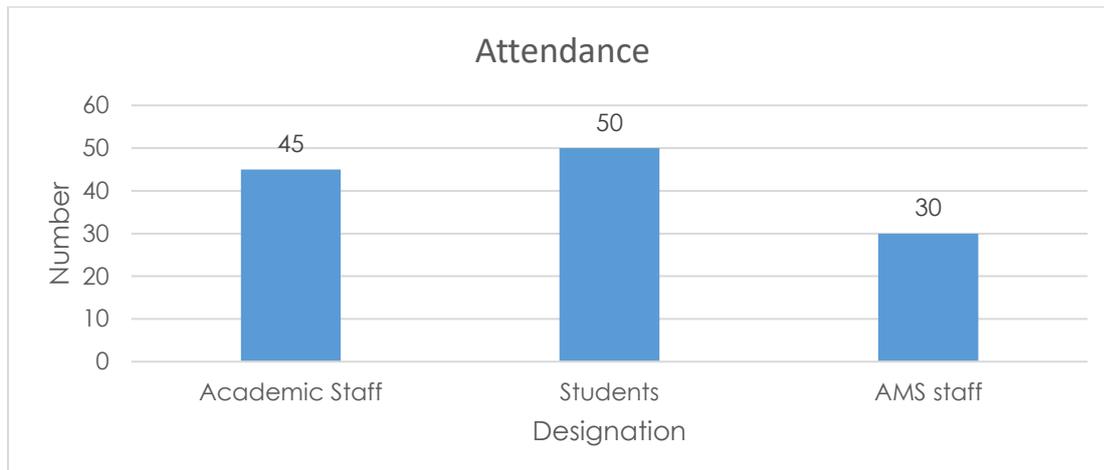
Professor Saras Reddy gave the overview of the programme

The programme for the day was divided into four sessions. The first session highlighted the AMS programmes in the College of Law and Management Studies; the academic monitoring and support programme (AMS); the academic writing interventions (Writing Place) and the Bachelor of Commerce Foundation Programme. The second session focused on the AMS programmes on offer at the three other institutions of higher learning in KwaZulu-Natal, i.e. UNIZULU, DUT, and MUT. Oral paper presentations were thematically organised during the third session and the fourth session involved small group discussions (consisting of representatives from the four UKZN Colleges) around perspectives on the development of a tutor/teaching assistant curriculum at UKZN.

ATTENDANCE

Out of the 127 delegates, 119 were from UKZN, 4 from DUT, 1 from the University of the Western Cape, and MUT and UNIZULU were represented by two delegates each. When disaggregated by designation, 45 of the delegates were academic staff, 50 were students, who were either tutors, mentors or academic development officers while 30 were identified as AMS staff who were on long-term contracts. Figure 1 below shows the attendance by designation.

Figure 1: 6th AMS Colloquium attendance by designation



KEYNOTE PANEL DISCUSSION 1: SHOWCASING CLMS AMS PROGRAMMES

Chair: Dr A Bengesai



Panelists: Ms Serrenta Naidoo, Writing Place Coordinator CLMS; Ms Prim Naidoo, AMS Programme Coordinator, CLMS; Dr A Bengesai, chair and Head of Teaching and Learning Unit, CLMS; Prof Sarojini Nadar, UWC and Dr Joseph, Jere, BCOM foundation Coordinator, CLMS.

Dr Annah Bengesai chaired the first key panel discussion. The first presenter, Ms Prim Naidoo highlighted some of the successes and challenges they faced in the AMS programme in the period 2016 to 2018. She reported that during this period, 2779 students individually consulted with an ADO of which 1186 (42.8%) were male and 1590(57.2%) were female. The majority of the students (53%) visited ADOs for content

support, 21% for test and exam preparation and 26% for academic skills such as time management. She also indicated that more than 80% of the students had seen the ADO once during the year and that those who regularly consulted were the high performing students. Hence, there is a need to encourage the 'At Risk' students to make use of the intervention. The programme also seemed to be working, as evidenced by the fact that 17% of the students who were 'At Risk' at the beginning of this period (2016) managed to acquire the maximum credits and move to good academic standing (a status which shows that a student has acquired at least 75% of their required credit load).

Ms Serrenta Naidoo presented on the operations of the Writing Place in the College of Law and Management Studies. The main purpose of this facility is to assist students with the development of literacy skills that are crucial to their success at the university. Writing support is offered in small group peer tutoring sessions that are student-centred and promote active learning. In 2018, 1339 students were seen across all three campuses in the first semester while in the second semester 1085 students were assisted at the Writing Place. In the first semester of 2018, 18% (242) of students visiting the Writing Place were identified as 'At Risk' or 'Underperforming'. The remaining 82% (1097) were on 'Good Standing' status.

Five modules with the highest attendance of students per module (MARK 302, MARK 305, PADM 1BO, SCMA 311 and SCMA 2OM) were identified and a basic analysis was conducted to compare the marks of students who had attended the Writing Place with the marks of their counterparts in the module who had not attended the Writing Place. The marks for the written assignments from these modules were accessed on the Student Management System. The average marks achieved by students who had attended the Writing Place were higher than for students who had not attended. In Marketing 302, for example, even though the average mark for students attending the Writing Place is not remarkably high at only 55.3%, it is still 9.3% higher than the average mark of students who had not attended the Writing Place at all. A similar trend is evident for the other four modules: the average marks for students attending the Writing Place are higher. The difference in the average marks was also higher in modules with greater Writing Place attendance. While this very basic analysis is by no means exhaustive, it is useful to have this type of quantitative information to support students' perceptions from the evaluation forms.

Module	Percent Attend WP	Avg mark WP Attendees (%)	Avg Mark Non-attendees (%)	Difference (%)
MARK 302	43%	55,3	46	9,3
MARK 305	33,80%	66,4	58,8	7,6
PADM 1BO	22%	65,7	63	2,7
SCMA 311	20%	68,8	66,1	2,7
SCMA 20M	11,30%	61,2	57,6	3,6

Dr Joseph Jere did the presentation on the Bachelor of Commerce Foundation. He focused on the support that is offered to students, which includes among other things:

- “real time” monitoring and evaluation of student results
- close relationships built into the programme with student services offering personal counselling support and various group sessions
- open-door policy encouraging student consultations
- a dedicated programme coordinator to monitor student overall student performance, wellbeing and adjustment in the programme
- dedicated classes (lecture rooms) exclusive to students in the Foundation Programme to use for study and other academic activities such as tutorials can be attributed to be building and maintaining the perception of social support and belonging

KEYNOTE PANEL DISCUSSION 2: SHARING INSTITUTIONAL AMS PROGRAMMES: PERSPECTIVES FROM DUT, MUT AND UNIZULU

Chair: Prof Kriben Pillay



Panelists from left: Ms Bawinile Mthanti, UNIZULU; Mr Edgar Samkange, MUT, Dr Giff Mheta, DUT; Prof Kriben Pillay, chair and Dr Annah Bengesai.

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Mr Edgar Samkange did a presentation on the implementation of the First Year Experience (FYE) at Mangosuthu University of Technology, which was adopted as a key student support strategy at the institution. The key tenet for the FYE is that it is defined at each contact point with the following:

- Pre-enrolment and registration support
- Orientation and Extended Orientation
- Student Profiling and Monitoring
- Peer/Senior student support
- First Year Teacher and Teaching

Mr Samkange indicated that the support of top management and the integrated approach adopted were instrumental in the success of the programme to date.

Dr Gift Mheta, from the Durban University of Technology, presented on the Writing Centre. He mentioned that their tutors were mainly postgraduate students, although they also employed a "few good undergraduate students". All tutors undergo initial training at the beginning of the year, and there is ongoing training throughout the year. They also have weekly meetings and encourage 'peer training' as well. Dr Mheta also indicated that on average, 40% of the students at all the DUT campuses make use of the Writing Centre. He credited the high uptake of the Centre's service to the various marketing awareness campaigns that they offer, which include; road shows and writing competitions. Some of the activities offered in their Writing Centre include:

- One-to-one writing consultations
- Academic writing workshops
- Creative writing workshops
- Reading, writing and discussion groups

From UNIZULU, Ms Bawinile Mthanti did a presentation on the intervention offered in the Faculty of Commerce. The intervention focuses on peer mentorship, early tracking of under-performing students, and recognition of top performing students at school, faculty and university levels. She reported that their intervention was regarded as being highly beneficial to the students.

ORAL PAPER PRESENTATIONS

A total of 26 abstracts were submitted for the 6th AMS Colloquium which were all accepted for presentation, although some had to be revised based on the guidance provided by the abstract reviewers. The topics ranged from psycho-social support, evaluation of AMS programmes, uptake of AMS services and Writing support. There were also papers that discussed theories around AMS support. The papers were presented in five breakaway sessions. Each session had a chair and a judge, who both evaluated the quality of the presentations. The top presentations in each session were given a gift and all presenters were motivated to develop their presentations into publications.

COLLEGE PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TUTOR/TEACHING ASSISTANT CURRICULUM

For this session, the delegates were organised into four small groups based on the Colleges they belonged to. A team that had been set up by the University Teaching and Learning Office (UTLO) to develop a tutor-training programme chaired these sessions. The aim of the discussions was to answer the following critical questions:

1. Who are the tutors/teaching assistants in your College?
2. What are their roles and responsibilities?
3. What are the knowledge, skills and attitudes that they should be competent in?

Feedback from the sessions:

There was consensus from all four Colleges that currently there was no clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of tutors, ADOs, or mentors, even within the same College. This, however, has been a recurring concern over the years and efforts are currently underway to resolve the matter. Other issues that came up from the college discussions were:

Tutors require the following skills or training:

- Facilitation skills
- Time management skills
- Educational theory
- Assessment skills
- Practical teaching and learning skills

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Tutors/ADOs/Mentors who were in the small groups also indicated that they themselves needed counselling given that they experienced immense pressure during their tutorials/counselling sessions with the students. They further reported that sometimes they did not know how to handle the stress of giving support to the students. In addition, the tutors/ADOs also emphasised that they needed to be recognised as an integral part of the teaching and learning process.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE DAY'S PROCEEDINGS AND A WAY FORWARD



Professor Sarojini Nadar

Prof Nadar applauded the UKZN for its efforts in promoting AMS over the years and in hosting the AMS Colloquium since 2013. She also indicated that while 6 years have passed since the inaugural colloquium, the same questions linger regarding what constitutes best practice in AMS. While she applauded the focus in evaluation and quantitative evidence, she indicated that this should not be done at the expense of theory and more qualitative approaches. Theory was needed to understand some of the questions that the AMS programmes have been trying to answer over the years.

KEY RESOLUTIONS

Dr Dhunpath summarised the key resolutions taken during the colloquium as follows:

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1. There is a lack of coherence in the various AMS activities, even within the same College. There is need for clarity in role definition and responsibilities of AMS practitioners.
2. A tutor-training programme is currently being developed which will take into account tutors' as well as College specific needs.
3. There is need for more theoretical understandings of student support.

CONCLUSION

The 6th Annual AMS Colloquium of 2018 was closed at 17h30 with a vote of thanks from Prof Brian McArthur.

A social function was held in the early evening to end the day and to provide the delegates and the Organising Task Team with an opportunity to reflect in an informal and social environment.