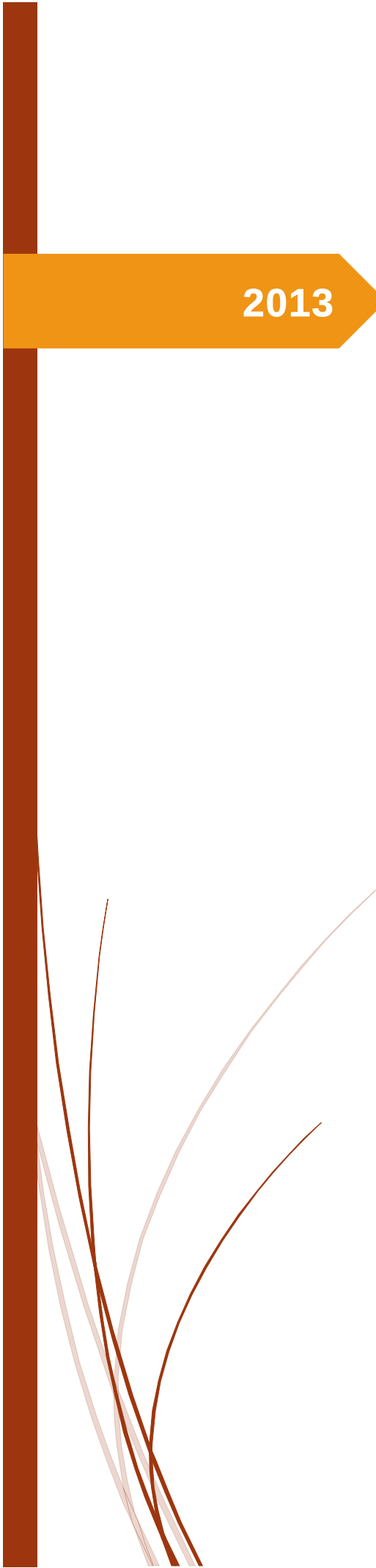


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2013

Report on UKZN AMS Research Colloquium

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UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction.....	4
Colloquium Organisation, Attendance and Participation	5
Welcome and Opening	5
Keynote Address.....	5
Plenary Discussions	6
Plenary Discussion 1	6
Plenary Discussion 2	10
Paper Presentations	14
Track 1: Monitoring Socio Economic/Linguistic Factors and Poor Performance	14
Track 2: Supporting Critical Thinking through Academic Literacy	14
Track 3: Monitoring and Supporting Retention and Throughput	14
Track 4: Institutionalising Effective Psycho-Social Support.....	14
Track 5: Theorising AMS Practices.....	15
Small Group Discussions.....	15
Feedback from Small Group Discussions.....	15
Critical Reflections and Resolutions: Professor Michael Samuel	18
Colloquium Evaluation.....	19
Acknowledgements	19

Key of Abbreviations

ADC: Academic Development Coordinator
ADO: Academic Development Officer
AMS: Academic Monitoring and Support
UTLO: University Teaching and Learning Office
CAES: College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science
CH: College of Humanities
CHS: College of Health Sciences
CLMS: College of Law and Management Studies
KPI: Key Performance Indicator
SI: Supplemental Instructor

Executive Summary

This report documents the first colloquium on Academic Monitoring and Support (AMS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), hosted by the College of Health Sciences and the University Teaching and Learning Office (UTLO) on 26 November 2013. The colloquium provided a platform for the university leadership and AMS practitioners to present current AMS practices, research findings and emerging trends that could inform the future of AMS at UKZN. The overall aim was to share exemplary practices, identify opportunities for collaboration and generate consensus on AMS at UKZN to enhance coherence across the university.

The days programme consisted of a welcome and opening address, a keynote lecture, plenary panel discussions, thematic paper presentations, small group discussions, critical reflections and concluded with the formulation of resolutions for best AMS practices in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at UKZN. The welcome and opening address was delivered by Professor Fikile Mtshali from the co-hosting College of Health Sciences. Professor Dianne Grayson, Director of Institutional Audits, Council on Higher Education, delivered the keynote lecture entitled, “Improving Student Success through Academic Monitoring and Support”.

The first plenary panel discussion entitled “Reflections of Current AMS Practices at UKZN” was aimed at providing an overview of AMS practices within each College. Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVC) were tasked to present an overview of the current AMS practises in their Colleges, identify areas where AMS was needed, present their strategies to address the needs and to provide a critical assessment of the challenges and opportunities for AMS in their Colleges. While DVCs were unable to attend, representatives from each College constituted the panel.

Session 2 began with thematic paper presentations. A total of 24 abstracts were received and the presentations were organised according to 5 thematic tracks as follows:

1. Socio-economic/linguistic factors and Student Progression
2. Critical Thinking and Academic Literacies
3. Monitoring and Supporting for enhanced Retention and Throughput
4. Institutionalising Effective Psycho-social Support
5. Theorising AMS Practices

The second plenary panel discussion entitled “Postgraduate AMS Strategies” was aimed at providing input on postgraduate AMS practices within each College. The Deans of Research were tasked with presenting their current postgraduate AMS strategies, discuss their successes/challenges and indicate how successes/challenges were being addressed at each College.

Next on the programme were the small group discussions that were chaired by the Deans of Teaching and Learning from each College. The Managers of Student Support Services served as scribes during the discussion which was aimed at brainstorming current AMS practices with a view to identifying best practice. The discussions concluded with the formulation of at least 5 resolutions from each group which were presented at the feedback session. The programme concluded with the summary of resolutions that were presented on “Enhancing the Efficacy of Academic Monitoring and Support at UKZN” by representatives from each College. Professor Michael Samuel provided a critical reflection of the day’s proceedings and summarised the resolutions presented by each College. Among the list of resolutions presented, the following two were deemed institutional imperatives:

1. Given the lack of clarity and consistency across Colleges regarding the identities of AMS personnel, their roles, responsibilities and job descriptions, an AMS Framework to regularise the sector in a coherent but flexible way is urgently required. Equally important is the need to develop clear accountability mechanisms and opportunities for career pathways for AMS practitioners.
2. A postgraduate on-line tracking system is needed to monitor postgraduate students' engagement, progress and support throughout the research process.

An analysis of the evaluations conducted reveals that the delegates were satisfied with the overall organisation and content of the Colloquium. Delegates felt that UKZN should host more Colloquia/seminars and workshops on issues related to academic, monitoring and support. It was resolved that the 2014 AMS Colloquium would be co-hosted by the College of Law & Management Studies and UTLO. One of the key foci of the 2014 Colloquium should be UKZN's Tutorial system.

Introduction

In 2006, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) implemented its Academic Monitoring and Support and Exclusions Policy to “ensure that as many students as possible are successful in their studies.” All four Colleges initiated the Academic Monitoring and Support (AMS) programmes to all students, irrespective of their risk status to enhance their academic performance. In 2011, the AMS Review Report, by UKZN’s Quality Promotions and Assurance, highlighted a number of functional systems and practices that were in place. There were however, substantial variations reported in the practices and in the conceptualisation of some of the roles and responsibilities of AMS personnel. The Review reflected areas where improvements could be affected for best practice. Since then a number of initiatives have been implemented to normalise and improve the processes and practices in AMS across the University.

It was in this context that a Research Colloquium on AMS at UKZN was held on 26 November 2013. The purpose of the Colloquium was to provide a platform for University leadership and AMS practitioners to present research findings and emerging trends to inform the future of AMS at UKZN. The overall aim of the Colloquium was to share exemplary practices, identify opportunities for collaboration and generate consensus on AMS at UKZN to enhance coherence across the University.

The Colloquium sought among others to:

1. Reflect on national and international trends in AMS practices with a view to appropriating best AMS practice that may enhance AMS at UKZN;
2. Explore best practices in AMS at UKZN at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels;
3. Generate consensus on the roles and responsibilities of key role players in AMS;
4. Establish common understanding of the terminology used in AMS to facilitate consistency wherever practical; and
5. Generate an AMS framework that informs the implementation of AMS in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at UKZN.

The theme of the Colloquium was “The Role of Academic Monitoring and Support in a Transforming University.” Submissions for oral presentations were invited from AMS practitioners across UKZN. A total of 24 abstracts were received and reviewed by members of the AMS Colloquium Scientific Committee. Emerging from the abstract submissions five sub-themes were identified as listed below:

1. Socio-economic/ linguistic factors and student progression;
2. Critical thinking and Academic Literacies;
3. Monitoring and Supporting for enhanced retention and throughput;
4. Institutionalising effective psycho-social support; and
5. Theorising AMS practices

The days programme consisted of a welcome and opening address, a keynote address, plenary panel discussions, paper presentations, small-group discussions, critical reflections on the proceedings and resolutions on the way forward regarding AMS at UKZN. The report will now provide a brief overview of the different components of the programme.

Colloquium Organisation, Attendance and Participation

The first Research Colloquium on UKZN's Academic Monitoring and Support initiatives was held on 26 November 2013 at the UNITE Building, Howard College Campus. The event was hosted by the College of Health Sciences and the University Teaching and Learning Office. The organising committee comprised of Dr Saras Reddy (Chairperson, Health Sciences), Professor Fikile Mtshali (Health Sciences), Dr Rubby Dhunpath (UTLO), Dr Annah Bengasai (Law and Management Studies), Dr Vino Paideya (Agriculture, Engineering and Science), Dr Saloschini Pillay (Health Sciences), Ms Reshma Subbaye (UTLO) and Mrs Silindile Mchunu (UTLO, Administrator).

The Colloquium was attended by 70 delegates ranging from Deans for Teaching and Learning, Deans for Research, Directors of Professional Services, Managers of Student Support Services, Academic Development Coordinators (ADCs), Academic Development Officers (ADOs) and some students.

Welcome and Opening

Professor Fikile Mtshali, College of Health Sciences Dean for Teaching and Learning delivered the welcome and opening address. Her presentation detailed the rationale, purpose, aims and objectives of the Research Colloquium. She invited all the delegates to actively participate in the day's events in order to achieve the objectives of the Colloquium and to reach resolutions that will inform the future of AMS at UKZN.

Keynote Address

The keynote speaker was Professor Dianne Grayson, Director Institutional Audits, Council on Higher Education (CHE). The presentation entitled "Improving Student Success through Academic Monitoring and Support" set the scene for the day's proceedings. Through her presentation, Professor Grayson contextualised the need for the higher education sector to find ways of increasing student success given that the higher education system in South Africa is a low participation, high attrition system. She highlighted that there are fewer than one million students of a total population of fifty two million, yet only half of the students that enrol at universities graduate and only about one quarter do so in regulation time. In 2014, the Council on Higher Education will respond to this by launching the Quality Enhancement Project (QEP). She declared that the aim of the QEP was to "enhance student learning with a view to increasing the number of graduates with attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable."

The focus areas for the first two years are

- (1) enhancing university teachers;
- (2) enhancing student support;
- (3) enhancing the learning environment;
- (4) enhancing course and programme enrolment management.

The presentation focused on areas 2 and 4 specifically. Taking into consideration the main theme of the Colloquium, "The Role of Academic Monitoring and Support in a Transforming University" and noting that for many students the transition from school to university is overwhelming and South African schools do not encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and universities demand it, the presentation highlighted the value of early warning systems to stem student attrition. She argued that monitoring was not only important for tracking individual

student's progress but also for identifying systemic barriers to student success, providing data about what works and does not work, to inform institutional planning.

Plenary Discussions

Plenary Discussion 1

Topic: Reflections of Current AMS Practices at UKZN

Chair: Professor Renuka Vithal

Panellists: DVCs of all Colleges. The DVCs were unable to attend due to prior commitments and thus they sent the following representatives:

Professor Heinz Beckendahl (College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science), Professor Fikile Mtshali, (College of Health Sciences), Professor Sarojini Nadar (College of Humanities), Ms Prim Naidoo (College of Law and Management Studies)

The aim of the panel discussion was to provide an overview of AMS practices within each College. The presentations addressed the following critical areas:

1. Overview of current AMS practices in the College
2. Identification of areas where AMS is needed
3. Presentation of College strategies to address these needs
4. Critical assessment of challenges and opportunities of AMS in each College

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES: PROFESSOR SAROJINI NADAR

In the absence of the DVC of the College and the Dean of Teaching and Learning, Professor Nadar indicated that her presentation was based on her interpretation of the Quality Promotion and Assurance Report on The External Evaluation of Academic Monitoring and Support (August 2013) and the Report on Academic Monitoring and Support compiled by the University Teaching and Learning Office for UKZN Senate (November 2013). While she acknowledged that AMS strategies were in place at the College according to the reports, she stated that the greatest challenge was the operationalising of AMS at the College level. The presentation therefore sought to address the critical assessment of challenges and opportunities of AMS within the College. She provided the following 5 critical reflections:

1. Stakeholders: According to the reports the DVC's were supposed to be the chief stakeholders of AMS, instead the Deans of Teaching and Learning appeared prominently in the reports. There was a lack of mentioning of the role that School Deans played in AMS as well as the inconsistent appointments of ADCs across the Colleges. There appeared to be a lack of formal structure pertaining to the appointment of ADCs. The second issue regarding stakeholders was their participation in the reporting of AMS. She recommended that AMS items should serve as a standard agenda item on School Teaching and Learning Committees that eventually feed into College Management Committees for onward submission to Senate.
2. School's uptake of AMS: Professor Nadar questioned at what level did AMS find its greatest expression, School or College level? The question of ADCs versus ADOs emerged. Where should they be located and how do they articulate with each other? The issue of challenges pertaining to the oversight of AMS practices across campuses was also raised.

3. Evaluations: The AMS self-evaluation instrument is a checklist and does not allow for qualitative reflections of AMS practices and strategies. The recommendation was for the tool to be redesigned to incorporate qualitative engagement.
4. Sharing best AMS practices: It was stated that UTLO has recognised the need for formal platforms such as the pilot Research Colloquium on AMS to share best AMS practices. Most of the AMS activities are funded by outside funding for example the Teaching Development Grant from the Department of Higher Education Training, which raised the question of how these activities would become main-stream to the University.
5. Step up support to postgraduate students: Professor Nadar reported that all the documents on AMS reflected support to undergraduates. She raised the issue of the University's plan to increase the postgraduate student enrolment to a ratio of 65% postgraduates: 35% undergraduates by 2016 stating that postgraduate student support should be formalised and integrated into mainstream university structures.

It was noted that some participants voiced concerns that the presentation did not provide a complete reflection of AMS practices at the College and a more detailed overview was required.

COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES: PROFESSOR FIKILE MTSHALI

Professor Mtshali reported that at the College of Health Sciences, the belief that every student who meets the entry requirements has the potential to succeed is what underpins AMS. The College has adopted a collaborative approach to AMS with the AMS team comprising of both Academic and Student Support Services working together. Each partner in the AMS team has clearly defined roles and responsibilities. All AMS activities are coordinated at the College level including budgeting, planning of activities and funding applications. An online system has been developed for the purposes of tracking and recording of all students within the College.

Overview of AMS in the College of Health Sciences

COLLEGE AMS COORDINATOR

ACADEMIC COMPONENT (School level)	STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES (College Level)
ADOs (12)	Student Counsellors (3)
Ratio 1: 400 students	Focus: Psychosocial support
Focus: Ongoing tracking, monitoring, Referral and support	Career Guidance/Development Officer (1)
Peer Wellness Mentors (44)	Skills Development Officer (1)
Ratio 1: 15 students	Focus: Life and Academic skills
Focus: Support to first year students	Administrator
S I Leaders (21)	
Ratio 1: 10-15 students	

Focus: Peer collaborative learning for traditionally difficult courses and modules with low pass rates

Tutors/ Clinical and Residence Life Programme

Ratio 1: 10-15 students

Focus: Clinical tutors provide additional clinical skills

Residence Tutors provide after-hours academic support

The journey for undergraduates begins with the first year students' attendance at the compulsory pre-registration orientation programme that is coordinated by student support services and the ADOs. During the first year of study, first year students are paired with peer mentors and have the option of attending life/academic skills workshops. During April of each year, on-line student profiling is conducted for the early warning of students. Students are then advised on the interventions that they should attend. Ongoing tracking and support is provided to students until they complete their studies. Before graduation, students are invited to attend workshops which are aimed to prepare them for their working lives.

Areas where AMS is needed

1. There is an increase in the enrolment of students from rural areas due to the shortage of health care professionals in these areas. Students coming from these areas have a greater need for support.
2. Health Sciences have a large number of high achievers. Collaborative learning teams have been developed where these high achieving students play leadership roles for example they serve as facilitators for the sessions. In this way their leadership skills are developed.
3. Students need to be globally competitive thus AMS is required to produce such graduates.

Challenges

1. Line management of ADOs appears to be problematic. ADOs report to School Managers. However, their work is academic in nature. For example they are required to write monthly reports on student performance which are then submitted to the Academic Leaders of Teaching and Learning. Hence this results in confusion around whom they should be reporting to.
2. ADOs do not have clear job profiles and career pathways. There are suggestions that they should follow an academic career pathway since AMS is directly integrated into teaching.
3. The time-tabling of AMS activities into the mainstream curricula is also challenging.

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE: PROFESSOR HEINZ BECKENDAHL

Professor Beckendahl reported that the Dean for Teaching and Learning in the College was responsible for monitoring the pass rate and throughput of students. The AMS initiatives are collaborated with Student Support Services.

Overview

AMS initiatives take the form of tutorials across the College. Senior students and academic staff usually avail themselves to answer questions that junior students have during the day. Further

assistance which is delivered by ADCs or Directors of Studies varies in the different Schools. For example the School of Chemistry and Physics uses Directors of Studies. There are usually 50 students per Director of Study but the numbers differ across the Schools. The Supplemental Instruction (SI) System is used extensively in the Schools. Some Schools have 25 SI Leaders appointed. The SI System is gradually replacing the traditional tutorials since the interpretation is that the traditional tutorials are almost a repetition of the lectures and they encourage rote learning. It is believed that the SI tutorials encourage deeper understanding of the work. The robot system of tracking and monitoring students' progress is also in place. Students are informed immediately if they are identified as being "At Risk". The use of mother tongue in tutorials is another strategy that is being introduced. An investigation is underway to determine how this is impacting on the pass rates.

Challenges

1. The greatest challenge reported is the number of students versus the number of academic advisors. There is a shortage of the number of Directors of Study.
2. Student preparedness and the acceptance of students to reduce the number of modules taken so that they may cope with their workload is contested issue.
3. Poor writing skills are another challenge.
4. Staff who are responsible for teaching do not acknowledge and use teaching technologies such as Moodle.

COLLEGE OF LAW AND MANAGEMENT STUDIES: MS PRIM NAIDOO

Ms Naidoo provided an overview of the AMS initiatives that were being provided in the College. She reported that AMS was present at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Since 2009, the primary focus was on supporting undergraduate students however in the past two years postgraduate strategies have been also introduced. AMS although being coordinated at the College level was being run across each of the Schools in the College.

Where AMS is needed

Ms Naidoo stated that students required academic counselling and mentoring due to their under-preparedness to cope with University life. The College has thus appointed ADCs and ADOs to "hold their hands" through the first year. She also commented on the students' difficulties with coping with academic concepts and theories and the application thereof.

Time-management was also an area where AMS was needed since students found it challenging to negotiate their time within a study schedule and also to write examinations within a three hour time-frame. Student support services together with academic counsellors work together in this regard to provide support to the students.

Tutorial support is being provided across the Schools and Disciplines. This has been beneficial to students and there are measurable improvements in their examination results.

Opportunities

1. The College has an opportunity to track the AMS interventions and determine how students perform from their class tests, DPs and finally their examination results. For example the

Economics Support Programme offered students a pre- tutorial test and a post-tutorial test. Students who attended the tutorials scored an improvement by at least 10 %. Their marks improved from 61% to 71%.

2. Students who attended tutorials also performed better in the examinations. They achieved an average of 54% compared with students who did not attend tutorials who scored an average of 50%.
3. The Writing Place is another AMS initiative that has been in operation over the past few years. Students who attend this facility score an average of 56% in comparison to students who do not attend with an average of 48%.

Challenges

Ms Naidoo indicated that their greatest challenge was their inability to encourage the “At Risk” students to timeously seek the AMS services that were being offered. It was only in the period just prior to the examinations that students were seeking support.

Plenary Discussion 2

Topic: Postgraduate AMS Strategies

Chair: Dr Rubby Dhunpath

Panelists: Ms Fortune Shonhiwa (Agriculture, Engineering and Science), Professor Fikile Mtshali (Health Sciences), Professor Sarojini Nadar (Humanities), Professor Kriben Pillay (Law and Management Studies)

The aim of the panel discussion was to provide input on postgraduate AMS strategies within the Colleges. The presentations addressed the following critical areas:

1. What are the current AMS strategies for postgraduate students in each College?
2. What are their successes/challenges?
3. How can these successes/challenges be addressed?

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES: PROFESSOR SAROJINI NADAR (IN LIEU OF PROFESSOR HLONGWA)

Professor Nadar reported on three key interventions for postgraduate support in place since 2012. They are as follows:

1. Analysis of Supervisors Progress Reports for Masters and PhD Students

Supervisors are required to complete progress reports for each of their postgraduate students by July each year. The report is aimed at providing details of the progress that each student is making and may be equated to the ‘robot system’ at undergraduate level which serves to ‘catch’ students who are making slow progress/who are at risk of not graduating. Professor Nadar however reported that there were several practical challenges regarding the progress reports as follows:

- Reports are manually completed – it becomes difficult to hand write the reports especially when there are large numbers of postgraduate students allocated to supervisors. It was recommended that an on-line system of reporting would alleviate this problem.

- Lack of/Too much detail on the report – some supervisors did not provide adequate information about the students' academic progress whilst others gave too much detail. It was recommended that a more systematic qualitative way of reporting be developed.
- Timeous submission of reports- the reports were being submitted for analysis to the College Research Office in September/October which was far too late for any intervention strategies to be put in place for students who were progressing too slowly. It was recommended that School ADOs work together with College ADCs to identify students who were 'at risk' of not graduating or progressing too slowly and to implement the necessary intervention strategies to support the students.

2. Cohort Model of Supervision

In 2012, the cohort model of supervision was rolled out to PhD students across the six Schools. The uniqueness of this model was its trans-disciplinary context. Students were provided with opportunities to present their work and to receive feedback from facilitators and peers from across the disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences. In 2012, ninety percent of the students who had registered for the cohort workshops successfully submitted and defended their research proposals. In 2013, the need for a Masters cohort model was identified and thus was introduced for the first time to Masters students with the aim of supporting them to write their research proposals. Based on the evaluations of the workshops, the students benefitted from this intervention and reported that they were able to complete their proposals and defend them on time. It is recommended that there be closer collaboration with the Schools and Disciplines for supporting Masters students through the writing of the dissertations.

3. The Annual Postgraduate Conference

In 2012 and 2013, the College hosted a postgraduate conference where all Masters and PhD students were invited to present papers based on their research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The conference was classified as a developmental and support initiative that took the students from the writing of the abstracts to the actual oral paper presentation and finally the write – up of a publishable paper for the conference proceedings/journal. This developmental exercise was in keeping with the recent Senate requirement which calls for the submission of a publishable paper together with the thesis for the PhD. To this end a Writers workshop was held after the conference with the aim of converting the conference presentation to a publishable paper. In 2012, 38 papers were published in the conference proceedings and this year 40 papers have been submitted for peer-review.

In conclusion, Professor Nadar commented that there needs to be an expanded understanding of monitoring and support for postgraduates and the focus should not just be on throughput and graduation rates. The central concern should be about the quality of the research education and training and not about the obtaining of the qualification. Another factor is that monitoring and support should be tailored to suit individual postgraduate students because of their contexts. Professor Nadar commented on the Research Commons at the Edgewood campus that exemplifies best practise for postgraduate support through ideal social spaces and learning environments.

COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES: PROFESSOR FIKILE MTSHALI

Support Strategies

Professor Mtshali reported that there were no formalised programmes to support postgraduate students at a College level; however Schools had their own initiatives in place. She commented that there were also some common strategies across the College as follows:

1. Integration of Postgraduate Students into University. This was a one week orientation programme that took students through basic academic skills, IT skills, library and referencing skills, on-line support systems and resources and plagiarism check systems among others.
2. The College Dean of Research runs one week workshops at the different Schools aimed at supporting postgraduate students with the writing of their research proposals.
3. PhD students have the opportunity of presenting their work at PhD Seminars which are organised in the Schools and their Disciplines. By presenting their work to the Discipline experts they receive feedback and shape their projects accordingly.
4. College statisticians are available to assist all postgraduate students; however there are not enough of them and thus funding is required for the appointment of more statisticians.
5. At School level, Journal Clubs are held where postgraduate students and academics come together to engage with the literature in the specific disciplines.
6. The College has funding to support PhD students to attend at least one international conference. Students are encouraged to present their findings to an international community where they are subjected to global critique before the submission of their final theses for examination.
7. The College hosts a College Research Day which is usually a two day event where postgraduate students are encouraged to present their research.

Challenges

1. There is a need for more research supervisors across the College. Due to staff leaving the College there is a need to build research supervision capacity.
2. There is a need to appoint more statisticians.
3. The College does not have an expert who can support students with qualitative research studies. An appointment of such an expert is required.

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE: MS FORTUNE SHONHIWA

Ms Shonhiwa is the coordinator of the postgraduate support programme called 'Mastering the Masters Programme'. She reported on the postgraduate AMS initiatives that were being offered at the College as follows:

Monitoring Strategies:

1. A questionnaire was developed and sent to all postgraduate students who were registered across all the schools in the College. The aim of the questionnaire was to determine the profile of the students in terms of their age, nationality, former Universities attended, the duration of their registration at UKZN and marital status. The questionnaires are still with the schools and will be analysed on receipt.

2. The second monitoring strategy was based on the profiles of supervisors. The number of postgraduate students who were allocated to each supervisor was determined. Also a record of which academics were engaged in postgraduate supervision was recorded.
3. A pre-workshop questionnaire and a post workshop questionnaire were distributed to all postgraduate students with the aim of determining their knowledge and skills on thesis writing. A series of 8 workshops were offered.

Support Strategies

1. Funding to Masters and PhD Students: This strategy was employed to attract postgraduate enrolment. Scholarships, sponsorships, part-time employment, increased supervision capacity and partnerships with industry are some of the strategies at the College.
2. Mastering the Masters Programme: This programme is focused on developing the life and academic skills required of a postgraduate student who will be globally competitive. There are a series of 30 workshops that are offered to all masters students in the college. 22 of the workshops focus on core skills whilst the 8 focus on non- core, mainly technical skills. Some of the topics that are covered in these workshops are: library skills, end-note referencing, project planning, computer skills, reading and writing skills, components of a thesis, presentation skills, self-editing skills, to name just a few.
3. Writing for publishing retreat: The College hosted a writing for publishing retreat during the year. Eleven young academics and 25 PhD students who had already completed manuscripts attended. The aim was to complete the manuscripts in order to submit for publication. Evaluations revealed that the workshop was highly beneficial and recommended for the future.
4. Professional Academic Development: Some workshops were held to develop the capacity of postgraduate supervision.

Due to time, the presenter had to stop at this point.

COLLEGE OF LAW AND MANAGEMENT STUDIES: PROFESSOR KRIBEN PILLAY (IN LIEU OF THE COLLEGE DEAN OF RESEARCH)

Professor Pillay's presentation was based on his own experience as an academic coming from a postgraduate school and having supervised forty postgraduate students over the past six years. He reported that AMS in the College has largely been concerned with undergraduate students but since 2012 has been introduced to postgraduate students also as a result of the funding from UTLO TDG.

Where postgraduate support is needed: (Personal reflections)

1. It has been observed that a large number of students have severe deficiencies in basic language competencies even at postgraduate levels. Many of the students presenting with these deficiencies are in fact graduates from UKZN. This makes the writing of a dissertation or thesis really difficult.
2. The lack of ability to engage critically with the research project: Students are not able to write literature reviews based on a critical synthesis. They merely list what the authors in the field are writing. The choice of research methodology and design is often inappropriate to the

focus of the study and the analysis, findings and conclusions often don't match the objectives of the study. There appears to be a lack of research training and education for these students.

3. Plagiarism: A study conducted by Prof. Pillay revealed that 87% of students who submitted their research proposals were found to be over 20% plagiarised. This indicated that students were unable to grasp the technical aspects of plagiarism. They were copying large chunks off the internet and just simply changing a few words in the paragraph.

Strategies to address the above problems:

1. Each school has been encouraged to appoint a writing coach and a statistics coach who will work with individual postgraduate students. Where this is presently in place it has been found to improve the quality of the throughput of students as well as increase the numbers of students graduating.
2. Academics should be held accountable to maintain a balance between the quantity and the quality of graduates. They should not compromise the quality despite the institutions drive to increase throughput rates.

Paper Presentations

A total of 24 abstracts were received and reviewed. The presentations were categorised into five thematic tracks. Listed below are the thematic tracks and the critical questions that each of the presentations addressed:

Track 1: Monitoring Socio Economic/Linguistic Factors and Poor Performance

Chair/Tracker: Dr Jaya Naidoo

1. How do socio-economic/linguistic factors impact on poor academic performance of students?
2. What are the AMS initiatives in place at your College/School to address the above?
3. To what extent are these initiatives successful/ unsuccessful?

Track 2: Supporting Critical Thinking through Academic Literacy

Chair/Tracker: Dr Bev Soane

1. To what extent does a lack of critical thinking and academic literacy contribute to poor performance?
2. What are the AMS initiatives in place at your College/ School to address the above?
3. To what extent are these initiatives successful/ unsuccessful?

Track 3: Monitoring and Supporting Retention and Throughput

Chair/Tracker: Ms Rosanne O'Hara

1. How are retention and throughput rates monitored in your College/ School?
2. What are the AMS initiatives in place at your College/School to address retention and throughput rates of students?
3. To what extent are these initiatives successful/ unsuccessful?

Track 4: Institutionalising Effective Psycho-Social Support

Chair/Tracker: Ms Prim Naidoo

1. To what extent is psychosocial support needed to enable student success, and how do these forms of support interface with academic support?
2. What are the AMS initiatives in place at your College/School to address the psycho-social needs of students?
3. To what extent are these initiatives successful/ unsuccessful?

Track 5: Theorising AMS Practices

Chair/Tracker: Dr Nyna Amin

1. What theories inform AMS practices at your College/ School?
2. How do these theories support AMS strategies at your College/ School?

Each thematic track was allocated a Chair/Tracker and a scribe. The chairs were required to provide the operational leadership and as the trackers they were required to track and record how each presenter responded to the critical questions in each of the tracks. The trackers subsequently provided the information from the paper presentations during the small group discussions on “Enhancing the Efficacy of AMS at UKZN”. Each thematic track had four presentations each.

Small Group Discussions

Topic: Enhancing the Efficacy of Academic Monitoring and Support at UKZN

The delegates were organised into four small groups to discuss the topic as it pertains to each College. The aim of the discussion was to brainstorm current AMS practices with a view to identify best AMS practice at each College. Each small group was chaired by the College Dean for Teaching and Learning and the College Manager for Student Support Services acted as the scribe. The discussion focused on the following critical questions:

1. What are the current AMS practices?
2. To what extent are these AMS practices successful/ unsuccessful?
3. How do we move to adopt and implement best AMS practice at each College?

The trackers from the thematic paper presentations fed into this discussion based on the evidence provided by each of the presenters. Each small group had to present their resolutions that emerged from the discussions at the plenary feedback session.

Feedback from Small Group Discussions

Chair: Professor Michael Samuel

The panel was tasked with feeding back on five key resolutions that the group came up with on the future of AMS practices in their Colleges.

Panellists: Professor Heinz Beckendahl (Agriculture, Engineering and Science), Dr Saloschini Pillay (Health Sciences), Professor Sarojini Nadar (Humanities), Professor Kriben Pillay (Law and Management Studies)

COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES:

The key resolutions were categorised into undergraduate and postgraduate levels as follows:

Undergraduate:

1. Strengthen communication and feedback to students especially in clinical medicine where students do clinical blocks during the year and exams are held at the end of the year.
2. Student engagement for AMS should be started at the beginning of the year and not left until the codes appear on SMS.
3. To professionalise academic development services in order to capacitate ADOs.
4. To time-table academic skills development programmes into mainstream curriculum time-tables.
5. Develop computer and technology skills of first year students
6. To move beyond the orientation week in order to strengthen the first year experience.
7. To develop a College website focusing on AMS.
8. Strengthen the social and academic skills of both local and Cuban students.
9. Revisit living spaces which are not conducive to learning.
10. There should be a firm commitment by all stakeholders of the College to monitor and track student progress.

Postgraduate:

1. To formalise AMS for all postgraduate students across the College.
2. Formalise a structured programme of support, for example cohort supervision support.
3. Identify funding sources to support postgraduate students.
4. To develop writing for publication workshops
5. To capacitate supervisors to enable them to execute their supervision optimally.
6. Unblock systems that cause delays in the progress of postgraduate students for example the Ethics Committee.
7. Strengthen the monitoring of postgraduate students' progress.
8. Develop an on-line tracking and monitoring system for postgraduate students.
9. Appoint ADOs or ADCs just for postgraduate students

COLLEGE OF LAW AND MANAGEMENT STUDIES

The five key resolutions for AMS practices were put forward as follows:

1. Postgraduate monitoring: there should be a formalised mode for the monitoring of postgraduate students especially with the course work Masters students where the throughput rate is low. Academic Risk Letters should be sent to postgraduate students timeously so that the appropriate intervention strategies are put in place early.
2. Postgraduate support: there should be a formalised support structure for postgraduate students like the cohort model of supervision. The support should also extend to the development of adequate learning spaces, for example, research commons. There is also a

need to build more postgraduate supervision capacity. It appears that some academics do not know how to deal with 2013 students.

3. Stake-holders involvement in AMS: all role-players involved in AMS including the Teaching and Learning Unit, Student Support Services, Academic leaders of Teaching and Learning, Academic Leaders of Research, ADCs and ADOs should form a specialised forum that meets regularly to discuss, evaluate and implement AMS strategies that are in place across the College. Issues of supporting the first year student experience should also be deliberated on with regard to extending the support beyond the one week orientation programme.
4. Involvement of academics in AMS activities: it is important that all academics from the College be involved in AMS programmes and activities such as the AMS Colloquium so that they are abreast with AMS in general.
5. Development of an on-line tracking system: UKZN should develop and formalise a system that would be accessible to all students (undergraduate and postgraduate) and staff. This would prevent working in silos.

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Key resolutions:

1. Recognition of AMS personnel: permanent positions should be created for AMS personnel for example ADOs and ADCs. This will ensure the continuity of support for students. There should also be a specific career pathway determined for the ADOs and ADCs and their contribution to AMS be acknowledged and recognised. There should also be more training opportunities for SI Leaders and Tutors to ensure and enhance current successes.
2. Ratio of Tutors/SI Leaders to students: the number of Tutors/SI Leaders needs to be increased so that the ratio between them and students is narrowed. This should lead to more effective monitoring and support being offered to students.
3. The use of SMS: a more effective and efficient system for the use of SMS should be developed. Monitoring should be an on-going process and not only confined to periods immediately prior to and post- tests/examinations.
4. Postgraduate support: there should be clearly defined roles regarding the support for postgraduate students in terms of the functioning of the Dean of Research and the Dean of Teaching and Learning. Monitoring and support for postgraduate students should be started at an early stage and should be appropriate to the discipline in which the research is taking place.
5. Funding for AMS initiatives: The AMS structure should be integrated into the permanent University structure with funds being allocated from the central University budget. Funding from the Teaching Development Grant should not be the only source of funding for such initiatives. This will ensure the translation of policy into practice.

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

Key resolutions:

1. The appointment of a senior ADC: The policy calls for the appointment of a senior academic at College level to take on the roles and responsibilities of the ADC. This should be a permanent College level appointment.
2. AMS personnel: The roles and responsibilities of all the AMS personnel, for example ADCs, ADOs, Tutors at both College and school levels should be clearly defined with an appropriate career pathway in place and a reporting line management structure determined.
3. AMS structure and funding: the AMS structure should be fully integrated into the mainstream University structure and should not be reliant on outside funding and voluntary participation.
4. AMS a Key Performance Indicator: All school deans as well as the cross-cutting deans of Research and Teaching and Learning should include AMS strategies as a key performance indicator thus it will be incumbent on the deans to report on the AMS activities they have been involved in.
5. Development of a postgraduate tracking system: a similar system to the undergraduate 'robot system' should be in place to track the progress of postgraduate students so that students who are 'at risk' are identified early and the relevant intervention strategies are put in place timeously.

Critical Reflections and Resolutions: Professor Michael Samuel

Summary of Resolutions

All Colleges proposed an integrated, formalised structure for AMS that joins the policy intentions with practice operations. The current systems appear not to be working.

1. AMS should extend beyond the undergraduate level and should include monitoring and support for postgraduate students also.
2. A set of key programmatic skills enhancement programmes need to be developed for the process of developing postgraduate capacity. The focus should not only be on retention, throughput or output but should also include deepening the quality of the postgraduate provision.
3. Colleges felt that an on-line tracking system that monitors students' engagement throughout the research process is needed.
4. A greater sense of definition and clarity of roles and responsibilities was required for AMS personnel including their reporting accountabilities and career pathways.
5. AMS should become a KPA of the deans at school level and the cross cutting deans for Research and deans for Teaching and Learning.
6. There should be more involvement by academics in AMS activities and the Colleges were suggesting that UTLO should lead in making it compulsory for the academics to attend such Colloquia and Conferences on AMS. The involvement of academics should be at all levels, management to the lecturing staff.
7. Colleges stressed the need to pay attention to developing a dedicated programme to enhance the first year experience. This should be done in consultation with all services for example, academics, student support services, AMS personnel etc.
8. To move the discourse of AMS to be institutionalised as a formal system and be fully integrated into the university structure.

Colloquium Evaluation

The Colloquium delegates were required to rate the different aspects viz. colloquium administration and registration, venue, parking and catering using a 5- point Likert scale. 1=Poor 5=Excellent. The evaluation included open-ended questions which allowed for critique of the plenary sessions and overall general suggestions and comments.

Forty seven of the seventy delegates completed the evaluations resulting in a 67% response rate. An analysis of the average ratings for each of the aspects showed that the most of the items were rated highly (above 4 rating). Some of the open-ended responses were as follows:

"This was a well organised Colloquium, the spirit promoted participation and a wealth of information was generated which has potential to strengthen AMS in our College if adopted."

"More academics need to participate and be present at such events for AMS."

"We need more of these Colloquiums and all stakeholders should attend because student success is a shared responsibility."

"The absence of senior-level academics didn't set a good precedent for the value they place on such an event and the whole of AMS itself."

"All the panel sessions were beneficial because I learned something from each of them about AMS practices."

"It was great to attend the Colloquium yesterday. Great to meet the relevant people and find out about the actual support the university offers to students. I will be following up with the relevant people in the new year."

"I just want to say thank you for a very well- run colloquium. Everything was well organized and people were a pleasure to deal with. I had to leave just before the end, so could not thank you on the day. I would also like to add that all your helpers - those in the green T-shirts - were absolutely superb. Helpful - nothing was too much trouble, polite, pleasant, and calm no matter what. You had a wonderful team who did you proud."

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