



5TH ANNUAL ACADEMIC MONITORING & SUPPORT COLLOQUIUM 2017

Sustainability of Academic Monitoring and Support
for Students Success at the University of KwaZulu-
Natal, 24th November 2017

Prof Sinegugu Duma
Dumas1@ukzn.ac.za

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5th ANNUAL ACADEMIC MONITORING & SUPPORT COLLOQUIUM 2017

Introduction

The 5th Annual Academic Monitoring and Support (AMS) Colloquium, hosted for the second time by the College of Health Sciences was held on the 24th November 2017 at Unite Building. The 2017 AMS Colloquium of 2017 marked the beginning a second cycle of AMS colloquia hosted by each of the four colleges since 2013 and coincided with the end of the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) Teaching Development Grant (TDG) cycle and the anticipated new funding from DHET, known as the University Capacity Development Programme. It was therefore timely to have a theme "Sustainability of Academic Monitoring and Support for Students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in order to highlight and address any uncertainties which existed regarding the future of funding the Academic Monitoring and Support project in the incoming funding phase from DHET. The theme was built on the themes from previous colloquia, but took a different and pertinent format which ensured participation from both the University Management and students as beneficiaries of the AMS project as key presenters throughout the programme addressing the following sub-themes:

- Sustainability of the implementation of the AMS policy;
- Sustainability of AMS in terms of student success;
- AMS infrastructure beyond the TDG: AMS Model, AMS Resources, AMS Policy and Process, AMS mainstreaming;
- AMS beneficiaries – a panel plenary discussion by students

The audience also participated using the World Café Methodology to discuss current AMS praxis with a view to identify a sustainable AMS strategy beyond TDG in the University of KwaZulu Natal.

One hundred and twenty-five members, including academic staff, support staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students from all colleges attended the event. This was considered to be a good attendance despite the fact that it was a 'Black Friday' a day that is deemed to be a 'national shopping day' for those who are hooked on sales and bargains.

In opening and welcoming of delegates, Prof Sinegugu Duma, the Dean of Teaching and Learning, College of Health Sciences highlighted that “according to the European Commission (2006), a project is sustainable when it continues to deliver benefits to its beneficiaries and/or other constituencies for an extended period after the financial assistance has been terminated” thereby demonstrating that it would be important for the University of KwaZulu-Natal to sustain AMS beyond external funding. She also stressed the importance of the AMS colloquium as a space to pause, reflect and take stock of initiatives that have taken place or are planned towards sustainability of AMS across the university, as an indication of the University’s commitment and to accountability to the taxpayers’ whose money have been used to fund the AMS initiatives in UKZN and to the society for whom the University is obligated to produce professionals and practitioners who are ‘fit for purpose’ towards creating a just and equitable society. She gave a personal vote of thanks to the Organising Task Team of the 5th Annual AMS Colloquium of 2017, (see appendix A for list of the Organizing Task Team) and to Dr Sarasvathie Reddy for chairing the Organising Task Team with enthusiasm and positivity. She also thanked all speakers for availing themselves to share their views as well as delegates for attending in their numbers and early despite the rainy morning. She also thanked UTLO for funding the even and gave special appreciation to Dr Rubby Dunpath, Director of UTLO for personal support given during the planning phase of the Colloquium which demonstrated his commitment to the success of the colloquium and the future sustainability of Academic Monitoring and Support project at UKZN.

In her welcome speech, Dr Sarasvathie Reddy, the Chair of the AMS Colloquium 2017 Task Team and Programme Director for the day, emphasized that the colloquium aimed at building support within the structures of the curriculum and to institutionalise and mainstream the AMS so that it remains sustainable even during the turbulent times associated with the then eminent campus protests for fee-free education.

The incoming DVC and Head of the College of Health Sciences, Professor Busisiwe Ncama shared her vision for the College of Health Sciences and emphasised that

AMS is central to the core business of higher education and is key to unlocking the potential of students and human capital development. She also stressed the importance of AMS in improving student performance and academic success including those students identified by the ‘robot system’ to be at risk. She welcomed the delegates and wished them well throughout their deliberations during the event.

Session 1: Sustainability of the implementation of the AMS policy

The aim of this session was to understand sustainability of the implementation of the AMS policy from the perspective of the university management, hence the presenters were Prof B Pillay, the Acting DVC of Teaching & Learning and Mr Kishore Gorbada, the Acting Executive Director of Human Resources in UKZN. Prof Pillay, in his presentation indicated that the implementation of AMS demands innovative and cost-effective strategies in order to be able to ‘deliver more with less’. His presentation highlighted the impact of the different models of implementation of AMS across the Colleges, which makes it difficult to say that all students entering UKZN receive the same experience when it comes to academic monitoring and support. This, he said, was the result of flexibility in the implementation of the AMS policy and procedures.

In his presentation, Mr Gorbada, also highlighted the difference in the way the Academic Development Officers (ADO) are appointed as well as their current conditions of service across the colleges. While this has historical foundations, he indicated that its implications cannot be ignored, thus suggesting that Human Resources will welcome synergising the job profile of the ADOs as a strategy for implementation of AMS policy and procedures.

This session was concluded by opening the floor to the audience for questions to the two presenters. The questions and comments from the floor demonstrated general frustrations with how the issues that were raised in previous colloquia remain unresolved year after year. In particular, was the issue of the different models used in appointing and using Academic Development Officers, poor progress in mainstreaming of AMS services, thus indicating lack of commitment by the university to take actions, including development of appropriate job profiles for ADOs.

Questions and discussions also highlighted that academic monitoring and support services seemed to be more focused to undergraduate students while the postgraduate students, especially the international students are left to fend for themselves in a foreign and unsupportive academic environment. The response from the panel of presenters indicated willingness and commitment to identify or develop strategies to address the identified needs, not for international but all postgraduate students and students with disabilities across the university.

This session was facilitated by Prof Sinegugu Duma, Dean of Teaching & Learning: CHS)

Session 2: Sustainability of AMS in terms of student success

The aim of this session was to reflect on the successful implementation of AMS across the four colleges as evidenced by sound data and cohort analysis over the past 4 years of the implementation of AMS in UKZN. The presenters represented each college as follows:

- Dr S Pillay: Manager, Student Support Services (CHS)
- Dr Annah Bengesai: Head Teaching and Learning Unit (CLMS)
- Dr Anesh Maharaj: on behalf of Acting Dean of Teaching & Learning (CAES)
- Prof Ruth Hoskins: Acting Dean of Teaching & Learning (CH)

The presenters reflected on the successes, challenges and the way forward in the implementation of AMS in UKZN. The diversity of higher education and the complex nature of the needs entering higher education were highlighted throughout the presentations. The presentations further demonstrated a strong need for collaboration among academics and student support services as a key factor in supporting the AMS strategy, outcomes and impact. Through presentations it became evident that there is no single AMS strategy that can be applied across the colleges. However, all presenters agreed that there is a need for a tailor-made strategy to respond to specific and peculiar needs of students for successful and sustainable implementation of AMS in UKZN. This confirmed a need to revisit the development of a generic job profile for the ADOs and their career pathing as well as development of relevant and sustainable strategies to mainstream AMS in UKZN.

This session was facilitated by Prof Gugu Mchunu, Academic Leader: Discipline of Nursing)

Session 3: AMS infrastructure beyond the TDG: AMS Model, AMS Resources, AMS Policy and Process, AMS mainstreaming

Using the World Café Methodology to facilitate free group discussions, this session aimed at brainstorming and discussing the current AMS praxis with a view to identify a sustainable AMS strategy beyond TDG in the University of KwaZulu Natal. The audience was divided into their respective College groups. Each group was hosted by two members from a different College who acted as both the scribe and facilitator in a World Café approach. The groups and hosts are summarised in the table below:

Table 1: World Café Groups and Hosts

Group per College	Hosts
College of Health Sciences	Dr Jon Pocock (Academic Leader, Chemical Engineering) Fortune Shoniwa (College Representative, CAES)
College of Humanities	Prof Betty Mubangizi (Dean of Teaching & Learning: CLMS) Dr Joseph Jere (College Representative: CLMS)
College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science	Dr Samukelisiwe Mngomezulu (Academic Leader, CH) Victor Nnadozie (College Representative, CH)
College of Law and Management Studies	Prof Irene Mackraj (Academic Leader, Teaching & Learning, CHS – LMMS)

The discussions in each World Café group addressed the following questions:

- What is working well in AMS in your college and why?
- What is not working well in AMS in your college and why?
- What needs to change for AMS to be more relevant and responsive?
- What needs to be retained in AMS?
- To what extent has the implementation of the AMS Policy supported the AMS infrastructure over the past 4 years (2013-2017)?

- What are the experiences regarding the allocation of funds to meet the AMS needs of UKZN students over the past 4 years (2013-2017)?
- How do we sustain and maintain AMS activities beyond the TDG?

The hosts from each group presented the responses and resolutions from their respective groups at the plenary session after lunch. Most of the responses to the above questions and recommended resolutions confirmed the earlier discussions

Session 4: AMS beneficiaries – a panel plenary discussion by students

The aim of this session was to showcase the success of the implementation of AMS in the College of Health Sciences, using the experiences of students as beneficiaries of the AMS project in UKZN.

Skye Crouch, an undergraduate nursing student shared her experiences as a Peer Wellness mentor to junior students. Jeshika Luckraj, a postgraduate student in School of Health Sciences also shared her experiences as an Academic Mentor. Though both students were not on the receiving end of the AMS services per se, they both confirmed that they had personally observed the benefits of these services in improving students' performance. However, they both indicated anxiety regarding the sustainability of AMS in UKZN if the programme does not get mainstreamed.

This session was facilitated by Mondli Khumalo, MSRC Deputy President 2017, (SCM).

In conclusion Prof Verusia Chetty summarised the key resolutions from all the colloquium as follows:

- A need to embrace the diversity of the Colleges while striving to ensure that both undergraduate and postgraduate students and students with special needs receive quality and sustainable academic monitoring and support throughout their stay in UKZN;
- A call for a generic job profile for ADOs that is flexible enough to cater for specific college needs;
- A call for career pathing for ADOs for professional development and advancement of their careers;

- A call for appropriate strategies to mainstream AMS and to build sustainable infrastructure in support of AMS at UKZN.

The 5th Annual AMS Colloquium of 2017 opened at 07h45 for registration and closed at 17h30 with a vote of thanks from Dr Sarasvathie Reddy.

A cocktail 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.

[Funding of the 5th Annual AMS Colloquium of 2017](#)

The sum of R100 000 was received from UTLO to fund the event, see appendix C for budget. Additional sponsorship for gifts to the speakers and delegates were sourced by the CHS Public Relations Office, Ms Nombuso Dlamini and Ms Lihle Sosibo. Sponsors were Van Schaik Book Store and Durban ICC.

[Participants Evaluation of the Colloquium](#)

Eighty-five participants returned the evaluation form. The majority of the participants evaluated all sessions positively, including the new structure and the venue. For detailed responses, see appendix c.

[Conclusions](#)

The 5th Annual Academic Monitoring & Support Colloquium of 2017 coincided with the end of the TDG by DHET. While there is an indication that UCDP, a new cycle of funding is coming, we believe that for AMS to be sustainable, the University of KwaZulu-Natal need to prioritise the mainstreaming of AMS activities into all its academic programmes and budgetary allocations rather than relying on external funding. We also believe that the new cycle of colloquia should focus on showcasing tangible results of the implementation of AMS policy at all levels.

Appendix A: 5th Annual AMS Organizing Task Team

Prof Sinegugu Duma (Committee Chairperson)

(Dean: Teaching & Learning: College of Health Sciences)

Dr Sarasvathie Reddy (Chairperson: Colloquium Organizing Task Team)

(Senior Lecturer: Higher Education Training and Development)

Ms Angeline Stephens

(Manager: Student Support Services: College of Humanities)

Dr Saloschini Pillay

(Manager: Student Support Services: College of Health Sciences)

Ms Aliya Vaid

(Manager: Student Support Services: College of Law and Management Studies)

Ms Benina Mkhonto

(Principal Programme Officer: College of Health Sciences)

Dr Anna Bengesai

(Head: Teaching & Learning Unit, College of Law and Management Studies)

Mr Victor Nnadozie

(AMS Coordinator: College of Humanities)

Ms Nombuso Dlamini

(Public Relations Officer: College of Health Sciences)

Ms Melissa Manuel

(Administrator: Teaching & Learning Office: College of Health Sciences)

Appendix B Colloquium Assistants

Dooshima Gbahabo

Kwanele Hlophe

Phumelela Duma

Siyabulela Mqgolozane

Noxolo Buthelezi

Amanda Zenande Hlongwane

Appendix C 5th Annual AMS Colloquium 2017 Budget

(see excel document attached)

Appendix D Evaluation of the Colloquium

Academic Monitoring and Support Colloquium 2017

Evaluation Form analysis

Thirty five (85) evaluation forms were returned and the following results show the respondents ratings per item.

1. Administration and registration

Efficiency of colloquium secretariat in managing administration.

56 respondents rated this item 5

20 respondents rated this item 4

7 rated this 3

Only 1 rated it 1

Only 1 rated it 1

Overall impression of the venue and catering

50 rated this item 5

25 rated this item 4

9 rated this item 3

Only 1 rated it 2

Quality of reception and registration

50 rated this item 5

20 rated it 4

16 rated it 3

3 rated this item 2

From the above items, the majority of respondents rated these items 5, meaning that they were happy with the services they received for administration and registration.

2. Sessions

Sessional speakers

47 rated the sessional speakers at 5

22 rated sessional speakers at 4

14 rated sessional speakers at 3

2 rated sessional speakers at 1

Overall themes

55 rated overall themes at 5

22 rated those at 4

8 rated those at 3

Programme structure

60 rated the programme structure at 5

15 rated the programme structure at 4

4 rated the programme structure 3.

6 rated the programme structure at 1

Regarding the session that was most interesting:

65 of respondents indicated that they enjoyed session 1 and two.

50 indicated that they enjoyed all the sessions.

The session that was least interesting:

Only three responded to this question

Comments on how can the colloquium be improved in the future:

"Give action of what was discussed today",

"It should be done over two days",

"Presentations by the AMS team would be great",

"Policies and suggestions should be implemented",

"Get more undergraduates of postgraduates who have benefited from AMS programme to share their experiences",

"Involve more students",

"Postgraduate AMS support should be given attention as well",
"Progress of the issues that were discussed in the previous colloquiums",
"send presentations to everyone present",
"Engage student voices",
"Should be held early in the year",
"All academics should attend",
"Do not host it on Friday/black Friday",
"Make follow-up on recommendations made"

Experiences of the small group:

"Useful to share experiences"
"Good but other participants did not speak in English, they only spoke in Zulu"
"Was boring, it didn't work well with me"
"It would have been more beneficial to work with colleagues from other colleges to share experiences and advices"
"Lively, rich and diverse"
"Very well managed and all members were fully participating in engaging the questions and answers"
"We were rushed! There was no time to present in small groups"
"Should have been mixed reps from each college"

Experience of feedback session:

"It was very informative"
"It felt tedious and unorganized"
"Insightful"
"Facilitators were just reading all comments as opposed to reflecting , summarizing the feedback. They should do this collaboratively. I hope we get this feedback, not only line managers but to all delegates."
"Feedback sessions were sufficiently addressed"
"It was interesting but with limited time. We wanted to present on PowerPoint"
"No indication of way forward or plans"

Experiences of question and answers:

"Very interesting but there are few academics"

"Questions showed a need for intervention of the concerns raised"

"Have a box for the questions that will then get read in the session and structure questions according to the theme"

"It was properly coordinated"

"It was good"

"It was very nice because everybody could ask questions and be answered well"

"Very informative and engaging"

"All questions were attended to"

"Best Part: Questions and answers should be basics of these sessions"

"Good although more time is required"

Overall experience of the colloquium:

"Good experience. However I do feel many people attending have totally ignored the responsibility of the student in making AMS a success. Too much emphasis is put on changing AMS structures but nothing is mentioned about changing accountability to students"

"Good and very important as we get to network as AMS staff from various colleges"

"Lovely! Welcoming but a bit too long"

"Informative"

"A good experience"

"Well organized"

"Very positive. I enjoyed the new format and greater collaboration between colleges"

"Every year the panel staff sits in front of the screen and blocks the screen. Please create another space for the guest speakers or presenters"

"Very good! The tea and coffee were very good but the providers of lunch were economical with food."

"Good theme to take AMS forward"

"The experience is good and it is expected to influence policy that will enhance student retention and throughput."

