UNISA | university of south africa

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

in response to

HEQC Audit Report, 2009, Number 24

June 2010

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Audit Portfolio
ACHRAM	Academic Human Resource Allocation Model
CE	Community engagement
CHE	Council for Higher Education
DCLD	Directorate Curriculum & Learning Development
DoHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DSPQA	Department of Strategy, Planning and Quality Assurance
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HET	Higher Education and Training
ICT	Information & Communication Technology
IOP	Institutional Operational Plan
IPF	Integrated Planning Framework
IQMAF	Integrated Quality Management and Assurance Framework
IRPD	International Relations and Partnerships Directorate
MIS	Management Information System
MLT	Medium to Longer Term
ODL	Open Distance Learning
PADRAM	Professional and Administrative Resource Allocation Model
PQM	Programme Qualification Mix
QA	Quality Assurance
QMAS	Quality Management and Assurance Systems
SMT	Short to Medium Term
SRAM	Strategic Resource Allocation Model
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
UQES	Unisa Quality Evaluation System

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The institutional audit provided a critical and illuminating lens on the quality improvement challenges confronting Unisa. The Audit Report was carefully analysed in a dialogic process across the university to prepare this response, which **demonstrates how Unisa has met and plans to respond to recommendations for quality improvements**. The exercise compelled Unisa to rethink its practices, systems and processes, and invoked the HEQC methodology of revisiting the assumptions underpinning the conceptualisation of the core areas and the way in which the university carried out its activities.

Unisa's approach to crafting the institutional improvement plan provided a consultative platform for a range of stakeholders. The initial portfolio submissions were subject to a first-level analysis in order to identify cross-cutting issues and concerns and thus determine emerging patterns. This analysis also informed the improvement strategy, and allowed for a critical review of the recommendations.

Methodologically, the scoping approach of critically analysing the evaluative outcomes produced the basis for drawing up a more coherent improvement plan. Unisa has chosen to weight and accord differential priority to the various recommendations (excluding those actions already addressed in its institutional operational plans).

The distillation of the key actions for the improvement plan for the period 2010 to 2015 is now underpinned by the following six themes.

1. Strategic and sustainable repositioning (MLT)

2. The reconceptualisation of ODL teaching and learning (MLT)

    2.1 PQM revitalisation

    2.2 ODL Staff development and delivery model

3. Organisational redesign and allocation of resources (SMT)

4. Improved system effectiveness and enhanced service delivery (SMT)

5. Organisational and governance structure redesign to create a transformative, innovative and enabling environment (MLT)

6. Research and innovation (MLT)

Since community engagement had not been included within the formal HEQC Audit process or the portfolio feedback, this component is addressed separately at this stage. The need to develop a quality management and assurance system has been reaffirmed. Two additional interventions, the quality assurance of governance processes and the advocacy work for persons of disabilities, have also been included in the final Improvement Plan.

The efforts and investment that went into constructing the final Unisa Improvement Plan have definitely helped to enable the development of a quality impact, monitoring and evaluation system for Unisa which, in the final analysis, was the intended objective of subjecting the institution to layers of external scrutiny. The suggested improvement themes and actions will be incorporated into the relevant functional and operational plans and, where necessary, supported by strategic and research projects.

1   THE PLANNING AND REVISION CONTEXT

1.1   Background

Unisa has consciously embarked upon subjecting its institutional quality assurance arrangements to external scrutiny since the 2007 Commonwealth of Learning (CoL) Trial Audit, in preparation for the 2008 HEQC Audit. This organisational learning and transformative approach to testing the quality and effectiveness of the linkages between the university's vision, strategic planning, management and review process has already proved beneficial. Unisa is certainly more "intelligible to itself" as a result, and considerably clearer in its thinking owing to its in-depth and shared focus regarding the HEQC quality audit.

Unisa's stated position in relation to the 2010 HEQC Audit Report, Number 24, is that the institutional audit essentially provided a heuristic framework to facilitate a systematic engagement with identified quality improvement challenges. It is within this framework that the institutional improvement plan was prepared, which ***demonstrates how Unisa has met and plans to respond to the recommendations for quality improvements contained in the audit report***. In addressing the commendations and recommendations, Unisa was compelled to rethink its practices, systems and processes in an attempt to sharpen emerging improvement initiatives for steering the university towards the desired state of providing quality learning.

The crafting and institutionalisation of these improvement initiatives are not detached from the institutional planning processes, but are seamlessly integrated into Unisa's

medium and long-term plans. This integration finds expression in the recently approved Unisa 2015 Revisited Strategic Plan. The strategic plan sets the direction for the next five years and provides a heightened responsiveness to a series of transformational challenges.

The revisions to the Quality Assurance Policy and the Integrated Quality Management and Assurance Framework (IQMAF)[1] were consequently undertaken and tabled for approval as the key drivers for embedding Unisa's overall quality regimen. Quality improvements are considered to be "leading performance indicators" in terms of the planning framework methodology and find expression at the strategic, functional and operational functions of the organisation.

To enable a distinction to be made between short-, medium- and long-term planning imperatives, and to facilitate careful monitoring, quality improvements are consciously defined in the revised Quality Assurance Policy in the following manner:

"refers to strategic and deeply conceptualised plans and projects, as leading performance indicators, scoped in response to evaluative outcomes and recommendations from any quality intervention, for example, audits, programme reviews, surveys or benchmarking exercises to ensure the insertion of planned changes that demonstrably contribute to transformation, effective student learning and the achievement of performance goals".

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[1] Tabled for approval at the *Professional, Academic and Administrative Quality Assurance Committee (PAAQAC) in May 2010*

## 1.2	Approach followed

Unisa's approach provided a consultative platform for a range of stakeholders. Upon receipt of the Final HEQC Audit Report in January 2010, Unisa's management affirmed the consultative process through a number of institutional engagements within portfolios and committee structures. The outcome of this process initially resulted in independent submissions from the various portfolios.

The portfolio submissions[2] were collated and sorted to determine emerging patterns; these then informed the basis for the improvement plan, and allowed for a critical review of the recommendations. During this phase, the depth and quality across the set of recommendations were noted, some being singular statements and others convoluted and located in certain contexts. Where substantive overlaps in relation to the systemic audit areas were evident, these were noted and linkages proposed.

This analysis clearly showed the emergent critical areas for improvement based on the numbers of actions proposed by the various portfolios. The highest among these is the efficiency and sustainability of the tutor system, followed by the rapid growth and expansion and associated capacity needed to deal with quality teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Workload analysis, student dissatisfaction, ODL staff development and capacity building also featured prominently.

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[2] Collated Portfolio HEQC Improvement Submissions dated 16 March 2010

It was deemed necessary to ensure that the indentified critical areas translate into quality improvement initiatives and prioritised actions. An analysis of the extent to which the institution has already addressed identified actions through planning and other initiatives since the HEQC audit in 2008 will inform the key actions required by the Improvement Plan.

2 SCOPE OF THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

2.1 Introduction

This section discusses the outcomes from the in-depth analysis of the collated portfolio submissions, reformulated actions, and proposes further clustering of cognate recommendations to arrive at substantive and overarching themes for the foundation of the Improvement Plan. Consensual agreements on the extent to which the improvement actions have already been addressed within the regular planning rhythms of the organisation are reflected in the rating scale for each recommendation.

An updated Unisa institutional position prefaces each commendation, explaining how each of these identified areas of strength are being maintained and further improved.

2.2   Institutional mission

COMMENDATION 1

The HEQC commends Unisa on the manner in which it used the merger processes to rethink the mission and vision of the institution and the implications of the mission and vision for the conceptualisation and implementation of the three core functions.

UPDATED INSTITUTIONAL POSITION
The five year revision to the Unisa 2015 Plan was concluded in September 2009. An Integrated Planning Framework and detailed methodology is now in its third iteration of implementation, infusing quality into organisational consciousness and core operations at every level. Concerted attempts to monitor and report more meaningfully at critical points are built into the planning strategy. The revisions to the Quality Policy and Integrated Quality Management and Assurance Framework (IQMAF), supported by customised protocols and evaluation tools, have been concluded and will be approved in May 2010. Implementation of the ODL QA training and development programme, built on the conceptual model and strategic intent, is planned as a key innovative staffing development initiative from 2010 onwards.

RECOMMENDATION 1: SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIC REPOSITIONING (LINK TO 2)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa monitor and assess the implications that rapid growth and expansion in student enrolment from other African countries have on the quality of learning offered to these students and their local counterparts.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Development of a system to monitor Unisa's rapid growth and expansion in accordance with its strategic direction, globalisation and market trends, analysing the implications for enrolment targets and quality ODL provisioning.			
Implement the provisions of the approved internationalisation strategy through the IRPD quality management and assurance systems (QMAS).			

Improve throughput and pass rates of students, monitoring the extent to which the social justice mandate is delivered through: • More rigorous student profiling and analyses in tracking system* • Throughput forum* • New assessment practices • Review of high risk modules* • Development of quality study material through Team Approach Framework in extended 7 year curriculum renewal cycle • Appropriate technology enhanced student support* • Tutor system*
Ensure that the revised Curriculum Policy and reconceptualisation of the teaching and learning approach explicates philosophical and pedagogical implications of ODL in SA, resulting in meaningful programme redesign for the comprehensive and adequate student support to facilitate student progression and success.
Re-conceptualised learner support strategy to include adequate support for local and foreign students. Improve online support services for students and support staff, ensuring comprehensive staff and tutor development strategy on ODL developments and practices.
Develop and implement ODL training and capacity building initiatives by April for training and retraining of staff.
Extract key recommendations from 2009 Organisational Development (OD) investigation into structures and processes related to international students to inform development of system.
Redesign of business processes and infuse reconceptualised teaching and learning, quality service to international students, as well as insert courseware development as a criterion for staff promotion into job descriptions, performance agreements and personal development plans of relevant employees.
Revisit university estates property and development plan to ensure proactive trends analysis and costing scenarios for maintaining, improving and renovating infrastructure and regional facilities in support of strategic direction.

RECOMMENDATION 2: SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIC REPOSITIONING (LINK TO 1)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa critically examine the extent to which its current lack of capacity to respond adequately to demands for access to higher education is jeopardising the institution's ability to fulfil its social justice mandate. This should include establishing Unisa's carrying capacity, and identifying those areas in which the institution cannot produce good graduates in an acceptable time frame.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Improve institutional infrastructure in line with approved property and maintenance plan and improve regional facilities. Development of the Florida Science Centre and building laboratories for CAES and CSET are key priorities. Strategy to be informed by development of a structural capital, financial and facilities planning model to pre-empt capacity needs and provide detailed information with regard to costing parameters- see 7, under Recommendation 1.			
Develop a regional model in line with the ODL model to assist with the capacity issues and to address student support needs adequately. Implement a system similar to ROAP to map the profile of incoming Unisa students in order to prepare for improved service delivery.			
Investigate the development of an integrated enrolment management and planning system that gives expression to Unisa identity as an ODL institution in order to ensure adequate carrying capacity and infrastructure.			
Develop generic admission requirements and revisit Admission Policy.			
Reduce and revitalise PQM toward coherent, streamlined and cutting edge curriculum. Finalise Unisa statement on Graduateness and Curriculum Policy and implement strategy.			
Piloting quality evaluation system to determine viability and sustainability of PQM to enhance curriculum coherence, improve teaching and learning and increase success and throughput rates in line with set ODL targets.			

RECOMMENDATION 3: PQM REVITALISATION AND IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS (LINK TO 11)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa identifies all programmes which require work integrated learning, assesses the extent to which this requirement is being fulfilled at appropriate levels of quality, and designs the necessary interventions to deal with those courses in which work integrated learning is unsatisfactorily implemented, or has been removed as a course requirement. This should take into account the ODL provision of WIL programmes and the legislative context in South Africa.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Given that WIL is an important conduit for executing its social justice mandate and for instilling service learning values in graduates (p 18), a monitoring system to ensure the PQM's comprehensiveness at 70:30 level will be developed in order to avoid academic drift.			
Redesign the specifications of vocational programmes (conceptual v contextual). Conduct a full investigation to consider alternative methods of WIL based on the financial and operational implications and adapt the WIL policy accordingly. Improvement and full implementation of the WIL management system will address current inefficiencies, such as exclusive assessment practices. Vocational type qualifications must ensure the students acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies required in the labour market. (pp 18-19)			

RECOMMENDATION 11: PQM REVITALISATION AND IMPROVING STUDENT LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS (LINK TO 3)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa establish the necessary mechanisms to analyse the extent to which student's learning experience at Unisa yield the kind of graduates the institution wishes to produce and, based on these findings, devise appropriate interventions to ensure that students do attain the expected learning outcomes.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
.REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Develop an online Quality Evaluation System (QES) to assess the quality of modules within a given cycle.			
Graduate cohort studies and stakeholder impact evaluations form part of the envisaged Quality Assurance system and will be implemented accordingly.			
Finalise and implement the Curriculum Policy – which replaces the Tuition Policy- and Statement on Graduateness, through the Team Approach across the curriculum.			

RECOMMENDATION 4: REVISIT RESOURCE ALLOCATION MODEL

The HEQC recommends that Unisa engage in a comprehensive and inclusive analysis of the workload of academics in different colleges and courses in order to understand its

impact on staff morale and quality of education, and devise appropriate strategies to deal with both challenges.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Conduct a full audit on the consumption of cost units and investigate possible policy amendments to align ACHRAM with emerging ODL needs. Implications for "weighted" workload allocations to ensure alignment of capacity to programme needs and conducting "an inclusive" analysis that addresses effective and timely deployment of resources still requires attention.			
Conduct a workload analysis, including revisiting the application of ACHRAM and PADRAM at departmental level and aligning academic and student support staff job descriptions to incorporate support for the tutor management system, development of tutorial materials, training and mentoring of tutors, and the evaluation of their performance.			
Conduct climate surveys to gauge employee engagement to inform effective talent management, enhancing staff engagement and reducing turnover.			

RECOMMENDATION 5: IMPROVE EFFICIENCIES AND SERVICE DELIVERY

The HEQC recommends that Unisa address student dissatisfaction with service delivery at the different stages of the student process and find appropriate solutions for both bad service and system failure so that the university fulfils the promises made in the institution's service charter.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system and plan for the university to give reliable, timely management information in a cost-effective manner with the aim of ensuring continuous improvement.			
Develop Human and Intellectual Resources Advancement plan through following actions: • Review Unisa's business processes and organisational structures in line with the new organisational architecture and assist with redesign of business processes to enhance service delivery. • Work with Department of Corporate Affairs in office of the VC, to train staff in service excellence and client care, infusing service excellence measures into performance agreements. • Implement effective talent management, with specific reference to black academics, to enhance staff			

engagement and reduce turnover. Conduct climate surveys to determine the latter.

Additional venues provided and expansion of facilities being undertaken currently to address the increased pressure on the infrastructure. Plans detailed in the IOP and departmental plans, with some projects funded by supplemented funds from DoHET.
Ensure updated service charters with clear turnaround times for all colleges in key activities.

2.3 Institutional planning, resource allocation and quality assurance

COMMENDATION 2

The HEQC commends Unisa on the work done in the portfolio Strategy, Planning and Partnerships and the manner in which the institution has been able to connect strategy, planning and resource allocation in order to support the achievement of Unisa's mission.

UPDATED INSTITUTIONAL POSITION
The commendation is informed by efforts to increase the sophistication and effectiveness of planning and management processes. The deepening of strategic and operational planning and execution at all levels, supported by high quality institutional research and organisational intelligence, is now embedded in the Integrated Planning Framework (IPF), and supported by the Integrated Quality Management and Assurance Framework (IQMAF). Revisions are being done to the resource allocation models, thus improving responsiveness to a changing external funding environment and for addressing the internal inefficiencies and gaps.

COMMENDATION 3

The HEQC commends Unisa on its finance portfolio's ability to understand the budgeting model as a fundamental tool to support the realisation of the institution's strategy, and on the work conducted in developing financial tools that respond to this understanding.

UPDATED INSTITUTIONAL POSITION
The financial tools are continuously being updated. Further developments include building monitoring capacity and the capability of senior and middle management to manage and fully utilise allocated funds. The need for a MIS that generates timely and accessible consumption reports to improve operations has been identified and addressed.

RECOMMENDATION 6: ORGANISATIONAL AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURAL REDESIGN (LINK TO 8, 12 AND 19)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa review the structure of the committees of Senate with a view to integrating different components of the teaching and learning process into a coherent set of policies and practices.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Review concluded in 2008-2009 and finalised by the Senate and Council in 2009. Composition and Terms of Reference of all committees reviewed at the beginning of 2009, integrating Teaching and Learning with the Senate Tuition and learner Support Committee. Integration of ODL implementation plan in activities of Senate Tuition and Learner Support Committees and Director IODL serves as member of Senate Tuition and Learner Support Committee. Throughput Forum also aligned.			
Develop a review framework for the reconfigured committees to ensure their strategic and leadership effectiveness in attaining the desired impacts.			

RECOMMENDATION 8: ORGANISATIONAL AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURAL REDESIGN (LINK TO 6, 12 AND 19)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa carefully monitor the impact that the different structures dealing with quality assurance have on improving the quality of learning provided by the institution (and, therefore, the student's educational experience).

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			

Review the effectiveness and integration of all relevant committees with regard to their specific roles and responsibilities to promote quality assurance and management. New oversight and governance arrangements are proposed in the revised QA Policy and IQMAF in support of this recommendation. To be approved May 2010 and incrementally rolled out.
Investigate Unisa's organisational structures and make recommendations for greater effectiveness. Carry out workload analysis infusing ODL principles and use of ICTs such as myUnisa into job descriptions and performance agreements of the relevant academics and support staff.
Framework for curriculum and module development, Framework for Team Approach, Curriculum Policy and Statement on Graduateness contribute towards improvement. Effectiveness of implementation will be monitored and reported quarterly.

RECOMMENDATION 12: ORGANISATIONAL AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURAL REDESIGN (LINK TO 6, 8 AND 19)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa critically assess the functions and responsibilities of the Senate Tuition Committee in terms of its effectiveness and efficiency in leading the implementation of the university's key teaching and learning policies.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			

Integrate Senate Tuition and Senate Learner Support Committee and redevelop terms of reference (implemented with constitution of Tuition and Learner Support Committee and the referral of the ODL Project to this committee). Relationship clarified and Senate Tuition and learner Support Committee to become vehicle for implementation of Throughput Forum's findings and proposals.

RECOMMENDATION 19: ORGANISATIONAL AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURAL REDESIGN (LINK TO 6, 8 AND 12)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa consider undertaking an assessment of the effectiveness of the Senate Research Committee in discharging its role in the

coordination, monitoring and evaluation of research. The outcomes of this assessment should provide the information required to design appropriate strategies that will support the performance of this committee and its effectiveness in driving Unisa's research policy.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Evaluate the terms of reference of Senate Research Committee (SENREC) to transform into a proactive committee providing consistent leadership in the development and implementation of research policy at the institution. Generating timely and integrated reports on the research function and achievements has also been identified as a requirement. Terms of Reference amended and new Institutional focus areas identified. Institutional Plan and College Plans in draft format.			
Revise the Institutional Research Plan accordingly, mindful of reported infrastructural inefficiencies (science labs); identify college and ODL research flagships programmes to drive innovation.			
Develop and implement the Research and Postgraduate Education Quality Management and Assurance Systems as detailed in the IQMAF as a central feature of the QA ODL training and development strategy.			

RECOMMENDATION 7: ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The HEQC recommends that Unisa analyse the situation of executive deans at different colleges and create an enabling environment for executive deans to provide academic leadership, management and strategic direction both to their faculties, colleges and to the institution.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Increase the authority devolved to executive deans, staff the deanery appropriately and prioritise leadership and management training and performance management of executive deans.			
Investigate the institution of a central project office for more effective coordination and management of strategic impacts.			
Develop proper Management Information Systems for Executive Deans relating to (for example) the			

utilisation of the Executive Dean's Fund, submission of examination papers and tutorial letters, the submission of assignments, etc.

2.4 General arrangements for quality teaching and learning

COMMENDATION 4

The HEQC commends Unisa on the development of web technology geared to support open distance learning in its different facets.

UPDATED INSTITUTIONAL POSITION
We have noted the resonance with the CoL commendation along similar lines. An ICT functional plan now addresses the imperative to deepen our pedagogical utilisation of these technology platforms. The myUnisa Advisory Board also oversees and contributes to this strategy. Two dedicated foci within the ODL Project Plan are expected to produce further refinements with regard to teaching and learning and appropriate ICT platforms that incorporate effective tutor management for quality ODL delivery.

COMMENDATION 5

The HEQC commends Unisa on the development of its power courses, which reflects a deep understanding of teaching in an open distance learning environment.

UPDATED INSTITUTIONAL POSITION
The curriculum approach and supporting systems underpinning the redesign of ODL courseware are being evaluated through a web-enabled quality evaluation system that is timely and cost effective. A related investigation also suggests that an extended seven year curriculum-planning and renewal cycle be implemented, given the complexities of migration to the HEQF and the lead times for ODL courseware design and redevelopment.

COMMENDATION 6

The HEQC commends Unisa on the work done by the Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development (ICLD) in the areas of curriculum development, professional learning and research in open distance learning.

UPDATED INSTITUTIONAL POSITION
The expertise and contribution of this important institutional facility for ODL provisioning will be improved through the staffing profile and capacity analysis proposed by the VP: Operations. Greater synergies have also been effected between DCLD – the institute has now become a Directorate – and the Department of Strategy, Planning and Quality Assurance (DSPQA) regarding policy renewal and reviews to the cycles for courseware redesign.

COMMENDATION 7

The HEQC commends Unisa on the conceptualisation and implementation of a programme focused on the comprehensive development of young academics.

UPDATED INSTITUTIONAL POSITION
This vital intervention to mitigate the effects of attrition, as the ageing cohort of academic leaders and researchers retire, is linked to a proposed investigation of the transformative impacts of staffing equity on the organisational culture, career-pathing and succession planning to improve effective leadership.

RECOMMENDATION 9: ODL STAFF AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT (LINK TO 14)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa considers the most appropriate mechanisms to make all academic staff involved in teaching integrate the pedagogical possibilities of *my*Unisa into their teaching. In this sense, improving staff ability to develop sound open distance courseware needs to be improved and encouraged. One way of achieving this would be to include courseware development as criteria for promotion of staff. The

HEQC strongly recommends that the institution find ways to ensure that all students have sustainable and regular access to the web in order to benefit from *my*Unisa.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Conduct an audit on the utilisation of technology in respect of all core institutional processes and develop a set of internal benchmarks for each process, and then develop a monitoring system to assess the utilisation and impact of technology as a medium for effective teaching and learning.			
Develop and approve conceptual framework for the tutor system and learner support, ensuring students have sustainable and regular access to the web in order to benefit from myUnisa.*			
Infuse ODL principles and use of ICTs such as myUnisa into job descriptions and performance agreements of the relevant academics and support staff. Contribute to the tutor management strategy through recruitment, selection, and training and performance management of tutors.			
Implement the team approach with learner support providing significant input in the use of technologies to support students (myUnisa).Tutors should be trained in the use of technologies ODL in order to be familiar with the variety of technologies available to support students.			
Implement Framework and work of ODL task team on ICT. Amend promotion criteria for academic staff. Amended criteria approved for teaching and learning focus at selection committees implemented.			

RECOMMENDATION 14: ODL STAFF AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT (LINK TO 9)

The HEQC recommends that, as a matter of urgency, Unisa finds ways of strengthening the capacity of the Institute for Curriculum and Learning Development, with the aim of substantially increasing the proportion of study guides that are based on sound curriculum principles. In order to facilitate this, it might be worth relocating the unit under the Academic and Research portfolio.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Investigate staff capacity in DCLD (ICLD), and develop and implement measure of capacity needed for recurriculation processes.			
Place DCLD (ICLD) in Academic Portfolio and strengthen capacity through planned review cycles and			

Curriculum Policy and Framework.

RECOMMENDATION 10: ODL DELIVERY MODEL (LINK TO 13, 16, 17 AND 18)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa develop an appropriate mechanism to establish the quantity and nature of the support required in the different modules and ensures that sufficient numbers of appropriately trained staff are available to support student learning.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Revisit learner support model and facilitate access for learners to communicate and feel supported by the institution through integrated courseware that includes tutorial support and constructive assessment strategies.			
Develop and implement an online Quality Evaluation System (QES) to assess the quality of teaching and learning at modular level within a given cycle.			
Carry out work study to establish the quantity and nature of the support required in the different modules. Assist with the training and performance management of these staff members.			
Assist with appropriate job descriptions, leadership and management training and performance management of chairs of department and deans.			

RECOMMENDATION 13: ODL DELIVERY MODEL (LINK TO 10, 16, 17 AND 18)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa analyse the potential impact of the impending semesterisation on the quality of learning across different modules, given current difficulties in the area of assessment considering Unisa's profile of student enrolments, in order to ensure that this system will not undermine the quality of learning.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Investigate impact of semesterisation on learner support activities and/or model with a view to delivering diverse services. Investigate dedicated support for struggling learners based on assessment outcomes.			

Monitor impact of semesterisation and put appropriate measures in place to ensure efficiency; implement new assessment practises for Unisa as defined in Recommendation 18.

RECOMMENDATION 15: STUDENT LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS

The HEQC recommends that Unisa conduct a detailed assessment of the quality of the library services provided to students in the regional centres and finds mechanisms to improve students' access to appropriate library facilities.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Finalise the implementation of the new Library structure and assist with training and performance management of Library staff to improve service quality. Help with business process improvement, workload analysis, staff training and performance management to improve quality of service delivery.			
The Unisa Library is currently finalising a quality management system in collaboration with its regional libraries to support service delivery across the institution and regions. A key element of this quality system is to conduct a detailed assessment of student needs and to revisit current service delivery. The renewal of resources and holdings, an increased budget to support student research needs, as well as facilitating improved regional access through a library commons and training rooms, are planned. Library Services will be improved by extended library hours and the introduction of mobile libraries.			
Finance and University Estates working with Library Services and Learner Support to provide additional infrastructure in all the regions, with budgets supplemented with funds from DoHET. Regional library developments and improvements for East London, Rustenburg, Florida and Akaki to be completed end 2010.			

RECOMMENDATION 16: ODL DELIVERY MODEL (LINK TO 10, 13, 17 AND 18)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa conduct, as a matter of urgency, a careful investigation into the efficiency and sustainability of its tutorial system in terms of enabling its students to achieve expected learning outcomes. Important aspects of this investigation should include the nature and quality of the interaction between lecturers, coordinators and tutors; the effectiveness of the training received by tutors; and the extent to which overall facilities in the regional centres are conducive to providing

adequate support to underprepared young students studying full time through distance learning. This assessment should be used to inform decisions about whether and when to stop enrolling students in those areas in which the institution cannot provide appropriate support.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Define the nature and purpose of the regional infrastructure relating to ODL so as to improve regional facilities, including learner support facilities.			
Review the tutorial system in terms of Unisa student needs, especially in the regions and remote areas, so as to deliver on the social justice mandate through rigorous tutor selection, training and mentoring.			
Develop and effectively implement a sustainable and efficient technology-enhanced learner support system.*			
Implement provisions of the Unisa broadband connectivity project and monitor its effect.			
Conduct a benchmarking investigation into the efficiency and sustainability of the tutorial system in terms of assisting students to achieve expected learning outcomes. The online quality evaluation system (QES) aimed at assessing all quality dimensions of modules through the student learning experience is a critical support intervention.			

RECOMMENDATION 17: ODL DELIVERY MODEL AND TECHNOLOGY (LINK TO 10, 13, 16 AND 18)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa use facilities such as *my*Unisa in order to improve tutor training and support.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Develop and effectively implement a sustainable and efficient technology-enhanced learner support system.*			
Develop an online tutor administration system with training modules and a support environment. Regional technology access for students should be updated where necessary, and should be constantly monitored.			

RECOMMENDATION 18: ODL DELIVERY MODEL (LINK TO 10 AND 13)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa implement effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of its assessment practices from both an administrative and academic point of view, as some of the current practices jeopardise the quality of the student experience and the achievement of the learning outcomes expected of its graduates.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			
Implement a decentralised scanning process that ensures that all assignments received at the regional offices are captured on the Unisa system at the point of delivery through the implementation of the suite of related operational actions.			
Develop and implement an online system to track and monitor the movement of assignments from point of receipt to completion of the process.			
Develop a tool that will make it possible to submit MCQ assignment answers online via the myUnisa platform, using mobile technology.			
Develop a systems platform for computer-based assessment.			
Develop and systematically implement new ODL assessment practices following curriculum streamlining and renewal processes.			
Revise WIL policy and practices in line with the vocational programme audit and redesign strategy.			
Develop and populate a dedicated assessment monitoring and evaluation framework as part of the Unisa portal to assist with the effective management of assessment.			

2.5   Quality arrangements for research and postgraduate education

RECOMMENDATION 20: RESEARCH FOCUS AND CAPACITY BUILDING (LINK TO 21, 22)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa reassess its aspiration to become one of the five research universities in South Africa until it has substantially improved the effectiveness of its teaching and learning core function, particularly in relation to student support, success and throughput.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			

Reconsider Unisa's research policy in view of DoHET requirements, with due regard for the following: • Unisa is expected to deliver 1.16 research outputs per capita. • Funding implications – the DoHET expects Unisa to improve research output. • Research profile and support are essential for attracting and retaining high-quality staff for teaching and learning.
Develop and implement a strategy to improve the quality and standing of Unisa's Journals for example by appointing external editors and/or advisory boards. Facilitate international exposure and engagement for researchers at all levels.
Develop a benchmarking model for research to monitor Unisa's progress in relation to other universities so as to set reliable and informed performance indicators for research, aligned to the QA system for research and PG education.
Assist with workload analysis and include appropriate academic priorities in job descriptions and performance agreements of academic staff.

RECOMMENDATION 21: RESEARCH FOCUS AND CAPACITY BUILDING (LINK TO 20 AND 22)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa introduce appropriate screening mechanisms to manage admissions to postgraduate degrees, taking into account the need to align supervisory capacity and student readiness.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented
REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS			

Design the specifications for an online system and platform for M & D registrations, and develop and implement these.
Simplify and reconsider admission requirements for postgraduate qualifications, aligning supervisory capacity and student readiness.

RECOMMENDATION 22: RESEARCH FOCUS AND CAPACITY BUILDING (LINK TO 20 AND 21)

The HEQC recommends that Unisa develop an appropriate system for the mentoring and training of supervisors and a system for monitoring the quality of the supervision that actually takes place in the various departments.

Needs action	Partially addressed in our planning	Addressed in our planning	Recommendation implemented

REFORMULATED IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS
Develop a system/programme of compulsory supervisor mentoring and training: the School for Graduate Studies plan for training students and supervisors – SHDC. Develop and implement a system for monitoring the quality of supervision at Unisa.
Benchmark the effectiveness of the strategy conceptually – diversification of research outputs, patents, citations and increased reputational image – by conducting postgraduate student and external stakeholder evaluation studies.
Assist with workload analysis, mentoring and training, and performance management of academic supervisors. Assist with the definition/description of leadership required for a complex organisation such as Unisa through improved job descriptions, performance management and leadership training and development for senior managers.
Introduce an improved administrative platform by simplifying the web registration platform so as to eliminate manual interventions, and embedding the applications process so as to ensure that all pre-registration activity is finalised prior to registration. Qualifications have been simplified and are now available in template format to facilitate understanding of the complex calendars.
Review and streamline the postgraduate PQM. Curricula should be appropriately simplified to facilitate understanding, academic progress and online registrations.
Initiate a joint project involving the Registrar's Office, Academic Planner and Corporate Communications and Marketing to consolidate institutional rules and regulations into a single source.
Following the identification by the working group investigating the implementation of ROAP of major shortcomings, discuss a new proposal for "an extended curriculum" to be discussed with CAES and CSET, the Office of the Academic Planner and DCCAD. The new model is to be put before Senate in August 2010 for approval and implementation across the university by 2012–2013.

3 THE DISTILLED IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Section two provided a detailed account per recommendation, indicating that a number of key actions have already been introduced into the regular planning of the organisations, represented in the accompanying rating scale. A conscious monitoring initiative will be undertaken and summative evaluation of the outcomes of these operational actions will be conducted to ensure that they do indeed contribute meaningfully to the planned continuous improvements.

Unisa has followed the HEQC strategy of first reexamining our conceptual approach, then considering the most appropriate reconfiguration of actions to serve as a basis for project interventions that would best facilitate the achievement of the desired improvements. Subsequent consultation produced further insights and an opportunity to incorporate key issues and concerns into the final formulation of the proposed projects foundational to the Unisa quality improvement plan.

The 37 identified key actions for the Unisa improvement plan for the period 2010–2015 were organised according to the 6 themes listed below. Short- to medium-term (SMT) timeframes indicate a period shorter than 3 years, whereas medium- to longer-term timeframes (MLT) indicate a period longer than 3 years.

1. Strategic and sustainable repositioning (MLT)
2. The reconceptualisation of ODL teaching and learning (MLT)

   2.1 PQM revitalisation

   2.2 ODL staff development and delivery model

3. Organisational redesign and allocation of resources (SMT)

4. Improved system effectiveness and enhanced service delivery (SMT)

5. Governance structure redesign for the creation of a transformative, innovative and enabling environment (MLT)

6. Research and innovation (MLT)

The final themes and distilled actions are presented in the table below.

THEME 1: STRATEGIC AND SUSTAINABLE REPOSITIONING (MLT)	
(Rec 1, 2 and portion of 20)	1. Determine the carrying capacity of Unisa as an ODL institution, identifying areas for growth in relation to enrolment targets for the development of a system to monitor Unisa's rapid growth and expansion in accordance with its strategic direction, globalisation and market trends, ensuring the provision of adequate support to local and foreign students. 2. Develop an inclusive international partnerships plan which defines and prioritises Unisa's position on the African continent and internationally, and ensure effective coordination, implementation and monitoring. 3. Reassess research and innovation aspirations by facilitating structured and beneficial engagement with the global knowledge economy so as to systematically build excellence through exposure and engagement for all levels of researchers. 4. Urgently finalise the organisational architecture in accordance with Unisa's business model and assure management of a more proactive university property planning regimen so as to ensure informative trends analysis and costing scenarios for maintaining, improving and renovating institutional infrastructure (local and foreign) in support of Unisa's strategic intent and enrolment targets.
THEME 2: THE RECONCEPTUALISATION OF ODL TEACHING AND LEARNING (MLT)	

2.1 PQM revitalisation **(Rec 3, 11 and 18)**	5. Monitor the new PQM, statement of graduateness and revised policies governing teaching, learning, student support and assessment so as to ensure that the critical learning competencies and graduate capabilities are attained through coherently designed curricula, applying the ODL team approach. 6. Define and develop the new and integrated ODL assessment practices, with student support at critical points, and monitor and evaluate the effective management of assessment so as to promote student learning progression. 7. Implement a series of cohort studies in academic, vocational and professional programmes to ascertain the extent to which students' learning experiences yield the type of graduate the institution wishes to produce. 8. Develop a monitoring system to ensure that the comprehensiveness of the PQM remains at a 70:30 level, ensuring articulation and learning pathways across the full spectrum of qualifications (academic, formative, vocational and professional). 9. Conduct a benchmarked review of all WIL programmes to correct current inefficiencies and to ensure that students acquire the knowledge, skills and applied competencies needed for the workplace. 10. Develop and implement an ODL customised and web-enabled quality evaluation system (UQES) for annual review of the quality of teaching and learning from multiple stakeholder perspectives in the second-order CESM category. 11. Develop and sustain an external stakeholder impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation system to evaluate the impact of Unisa's graduates and contributions at systemic levels.
2.2 ODL staff development and delivery model **(Rec 9, 10, 13, 14, 16 and 17)**	12. Investigate staff and organisational capacity in DCLD and all support units so as to be able to implement the team approach. 13. Implement the team approach for curriculum redesign so as to ensure the improvement of ICT-enhanced learning and provision of significant inputs into the use of appropriate technologies to support students, such as myUnisa and mobile technologies.

	14. Offer training opportunities for academics and tutors in the use of ODL technologies to deepen the pedagogical purposes of all ICT platforms, and allocate the necessary resources. 15. Conduct an audit of the optimal utilisation of all technology in respect of all core institutional processes, and develop a set of internal benchmarks. 16. Further consolidate the evolving monitoring system so as to assess the extent of utilisation and impact of technology for effective teaching and learning. 17. Conduct an investigation into the effect of semesterisation on learner support activities, focusing particularly on the delivery of diverse services and dedicated support for struggling learners. 18. Create a means for continuously monitoring and improving the learning experiences of students during the semester. 19. Develop an online tutor training and administration system to effectively implement the new tutor management framework.
THEME 3: ORGANISATIONAL REDESIGN AND ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES (SMT)	
(Rec 4)	20. Conduct an inclusive workload analysis per college for all core functions and align the academic and student support staff job descriptions to incorporate tutor management, the development of tutorial materials, training, mentoring, and performance evaluation of tutors. 21. Modify and integrate the resourcing models (ACHRAM and SRAM) as a result of the analysis. The analysis should also serve to redefine leadership and provide a basis for all job descriptions, performance management and training for senior managers and all other layers. 22. Talent management plan and integrated performance management system so as to investigate developmental career pathways for all sectors within the university, in accordance with ODL innovations. Colleges will conduct climate surveys as a basis for the implementation of effective talent management, the improvement of staff morale and the reduction of turnover rates; this would ultimately occur throughout the institution.
THEME 4: IMPROVED SYSTEM EFFECTIVENESS AND ENHANCED SERVICE DELIVERY (SMT)	

(Rec 5 and 15)	23. Investigate how to effect the integration and articulation of all systems at Unisa, reporting on the immediate actions required to improve Unisa's efficiency and service delivery. Ensure alignment and coordinate contribution to Action 3 at strategic level.
	24. Analyse all student satisfaction surveys in relation to promises made in the service charter, identify key institutional processes, and set and integrate standards for enhancing service delivery. Generate a range of recommendations from this process to be included in the 2011–2013 IOP.
	25. Finalise the implementation of the regional library infrastructure, and implement and review planned innovations such as the mobile libraries and expanding holdings in order to improve the quality of service delivery.
	26. Conduct a detailed assessment of student needs and review the costing and sustainability of the current library service delivery models.

THEME 5: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE REDESIGN FOR THE CREATION OF A TRANSFORMATIVE, INNOVATIVE AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT (MLT)

(Rec 6, 7, 8, 12 and 19)	27. Develop an institution-wide committee review framework and cycle, supported by policy and implementation procedures, to evaluate the strategic impact and effectiveness of all governance and decision-making structures.3
	28. Create an enabling environment that will support executive deans in executing their strategic and academic leadership roles at all levels and ensure expanded training and continuous opportunities for all levels of staff so as to bring about the best possible performance.
	29. Review the current strategic project platform to ensure closer adherence to Unisa's strategic intent and goals, and facilitate more effective engagement, coordination and management so as to improve efficiency and impact.

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[3] The review of macro-level governance structures is an additional action emanating from the UNGC project.

THEME 6: RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (MLT)	
(Rec 20, 21 and 22)	30. Reconsider and benchmark Unisa's research policy and programmatic foci in view of imperatives contained in the Unisa 2015 Revisited document through a comparative analysis of ODL contemporary trends.
	31. Develop more equitable incentives and a reward system to achieve a balance between ODL reflective, teaching and learning research and the current mainstream arrangements so as to exceed the DoHET norm of 1.16 research outputs per capita.
	32. Develop a model for online postgraduate admissions and management, ensuring alignment between intake and supervision capacity, simplification of curricula to facilitate academic progress, and effective monitoring of student performance.
	33. Benchmark the effectiveness and quality of research processes and outputs, improve the quality and standing of Unisa's journals, and focus on reputation and increasing the number of patents and citations.
	34. Improve the research profile so as to attract and retain high-quality staff and facilitate the equal participation of rated disciplinary and ODL reflective researchers in all strategic reconceptualisation and planning initiatives.
	35. Improve the administration system with regard to information management and data analysis so as to achieve meaningful reporting on and planning for PG education and research.
	36. Conduct regular postgraduate student and external stakeholder evaluation exercises to assess postgraduate capability and impact. Ensure alignment with and investigate later integration with Action 8, once both systems have been piloted and refined.
	37. Benchmark the general effectiveness of research, focussing on research outputs, patents, citations and improved research standing.

4   QUALITY MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (CE)

The HEQC panel agreed with the sentiment expressed in the Audit Portfolio that community engagement had been neglected as a formal system in the university had been neglected (AP:93). This situation is not unique to the institution, and attracted national attention after the first cycle of audits identified this as a common national trend. A recent CHE report[4] bemoans the fact that although community engagement is a clear policy imperative, it has been neglected, and that the often uncoordinated and personally inspired forms of engagement do not augur well for the achievement of the intended purposes.

The Unisa community engagement and outreach policy[5] recognises the potential for the transformation of higher education in relation to community development priorities and considers using the expertise of Unisa in the areas of teaching and research to address issues relevant to the priorities and to the mutual benefit of the community and the university. The CHE (2004b) defines community engagement as:

"Initiatives and processes through which the expertise of the higher education institution in the areas of teaching and research is applied to address issues relevant to its community. Community engagement typically finds expression in a variety of forms, ranging from informal and relatively unstructured activities to formal and structured academic programmes addressed at particular community needs (i.e. service learning programmes).

But regrettably, the policy then states that "community outreach refers to the voluntary outreach to communities by academics and other University employees, alumni or

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[4] Council on Higher Education (2010) *Community engagement in South African Higher Education,* Pretoria*.*

[5] Approved by Council on 26 January 2008.

students in response to the social, economic and political needs of communities. This is a one-way initiative from the University, its students and alumni, to communities".

The Unisa 2015 Revisited document seeks to correct this misconception in the restated mission, indicating the expectation of a mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationship with communities, achieved through active community engagement.

The development of a quality management and assurance system for community engagement is detailed in the revised integrated quality management and assurance framework (IQMAF). This will entail the reconceptualisation of a CE framework through an audit of existing practices and alignment with the provisions of the Unisa 2015 Revisited document. The latter clearly articulates the transformative approach of participatory and mutually beneficial partnerships. An integrated model for monitoring and reporting systemic effects based on a survey of best practices for characterising modes of university engagement with wider society is being developed to give strategic direction and provide coherence among the current diverse forms of engagement. The model will culminate in a set of institutional performance indicators as part of the overall impact, monitoring and evaluation quality assurance system.

5 ADDITIONAL QUALITY INNOVATIONS

5.1 Quality assurance of governance processes

Guided by Unisa's endorsement of the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and ODL international best practices, Unisa will conduct quality assurance reviews of its governing and management structures (Council and Senior Management), and in so doing, lead by example. A critical self-evaluation account will be produced every six years, followed by an on-site visit by a panel of external peer reviewers. The evaluative report and outcomes emanating from such an exercise will strengthen institutional governance arrangements and make more regular quality briefs to Council possible so

as to ensure full appreciation of systemic ODL impacts emanating from decision making. An additional outcome would provide the basis of a performance report to the Ministry of HET, facilitated by the members appointed by ministerial directive to serve on higher education institutional councils.

5.2   Advocacy and Interventions for persons with disabilities

Creating an enabling environment for persons with disabilities is another consciously designed strategic goal contained in the 2010 institutional operational plan. The improvement strategy consists of reviewing infrastructural facilities and registration and educational processes so as to ensure a barrier-free environment and thus to promote advocacy and awareness-raising throughout the institution with regard to the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

5.3   The Unisa Summer School's Campaign for Learning

The Unisa Summer School's Campaign for Learning comprises a compendium of customized learning initiatives that will encourage and inspire national informal learning in a variety of social contexts combining the crucial elements of community development, education, research and tuition and aligning with a network of academics, communities, social organisations and business. More specifically, the campaign

- encourages a **culture of learning** regardless of socio-economic circumstances
- **supports** business through quality training products
- **stimulates** scholarship
- **amplifies** existing informal education initiatives
- seeks to bridge the knowledge gap experienced by disadvantaged and marginalised communities through greater **access to learning**
- enables **unemployed people** through capacity development and skills training
- creates **networks and partnerships** towards education and social revitalization

It is important to distinguish Unisa's Summer School from other similar offerings. Unlike other Summer Schools

- This project encourages and promotes a culture of learning all year round, so that, all people can be better informed, equipped and prepared for life, study, work, community participation and global events
- Members of the public can enjoy a kaleidoscope of creative and innovative offerings in local communities
- Regardless of socio-economic circumstances, people can join the circle of knowledge creation

The first project of Unisa's Summer School is the Better World Village event a space to contemplate a vision for a Better World. The Better World Village layout locates sections for exhibitions and presentations. As a social learning space the Better World Village comprises a four week programme which will include conversation series and conferences, socio-economic empowerment and celebration. Our strategic relationships in this event are with the City of Tshwane, Tshwane Leadership Foundation, the Asoka Foundation, Heartlines, Life College, and The Institute for Urban Ministry.

5.4   The In-Service Training for Teachers Project (INSET)

In 2008, Unisa took a strategic decision to consider a project that will aim to shape our country's teachers and learners in becoming knowledgeable and skilled to face the challenges of the 21st century in South Africa. By its very nature this project expands on Unisa's identity as a comprehensive institution aiming to create African scholarship that is unique and meaningful to our communities. In fulfilling its intention to abide by the notion of "Education for All", INSET regards teachers as key stake holders who can make changes in the lives of our children. At the heart of INSET activities are classroom based training initiatives that allow teachers to identify their training needs. INSET is to

be regarded as a resource centre for all teachers where teachers after training can access material either on line or printed

To date, the project, called INSET, provides on-site in the classroom training for Grade R teachers in two provinces, North-West Province and Free State, as well as providing a full training programme for ABET in Erkuhuleni Province. Other provinces requesting immediate training are Northern Cape and KZN.

INSET works in synergy with the Colleges at Unisa but because its primary focus is on re-skilling maths and science teachers as well as literacy training, the two Colleges immediately affected are CSET and CHS.

5.5 The Academy of African Languages and Science

The Academy for African Languages and Science (AALS) can be defined as a knowledge production and application hub that aims to intellectualise and modernise South Africa's languages and thereby introduce them into curricula as mediums of tuition and research. A developmental approach will be taken in which African languages are promoted as languages of science, technology, education and research to create conditions for greater social integration and citizenship as well as cultural self-assertiveness for mother-tongue speakers of African languages at the University and beyond.

The chief aims of AALS are to:

- Provide expertise in the identification, formulation and implementation of joint projects in the area of language modernisation and development.
- Equip and seek to provide academic leadership and guidance on matters including policy harmonisation and language standardisation in the areas of lexicography and terminology development as well as orthography and spelling, with the provision of translation and interpretation services and materials as well as the establishment of call centres in South Africa and within the SADC.

- Promote curricula reform and the development of ODL modes of courseware, didactic materials and pedagogy for the learning and teaching of African languages at Unisa.

5.6   The African Innovation Project

Four leading international scholars have been invited to Unisa during 2010 to address the topic of what innovation means in and for Africa. The first of these, Professor Paulin Hountondji, gave a public lecture followed by a conversation circle to the Unisa community in March 2010. He will be followed by three more scholars who will focus on innovation in its various facets including technology for teaching and learning and innovative uses of technology in Africa and beyond.

5.7   Netbooks for Unisa students

This project aims to locate service providers who are prepared to source, service and deliver web-enabled netbooks for Unisa students. The project will begin with five postgraduate courses which are being designed as fully online courses, sourced from the five Colleges at Unisa and with the help of five course designers at the DCLD who will work in teams to ensure that innovative teaching and learning practices are enabled through these courses.

5.8   Graduateness

A day seminar was held on the topic of Graduateness to interrogate the draft statement on graduateness and to assess its potential for implementation as well as its impact on curriculum change and development. One of the key outcomes of the seminar was the recognition that Unisa needs to prepare and skill its graduates as global citizens and to question whether our current ways of designing curricula and our methods of teaching accomplish this or whether we need to invigorate our curriculum processes and our teaching with new pedagogies that are more congruent with the age in which we live.

The results of this seminar will feed into the International Conference on Teaching and Learning to be held in September 2011.

5.9   Future projects in line with Academic Transformation at Unisa

The university is in the process of appointing a leading researcher to drive the portfolio of the Archie Mafeje Institute for Applied Research on the Family and Poverty (AMIFAM). The aims of AMIFAM are to do applied research that will feed into and monitor policy formation on the effects of poverty on the family in South Africa and the Continent. The project has already received seed funding and it plans to run for 24 months after which it will become a fully fledged institute at Unisa.

A Centre for Technology Assisted Teaching and Learning is being investigated as a site for experimental research into the uses of technology for teaching and learning as well as a practicum for staff who wish to try out new ideas for open and distance learning. Initial visits to similar centres have begun and will continue throughout 2010.

It should be obvious that through a variety of projects, the university is advancing innovative academic enterprises which are relevant and socially responsive with the aim of making Unisa a world-class Open Distance Learning organization.

6   CONCLUDING REMARKS

The development of the Unisa improvement plan was a participative and consultative process, starting with initial portfolio feedback. The findings from this exercise revealed that 51 operational actions had been addressed, 1 partially addressed, and 5 fully implemented since the audit process; 50 were identified for the current improvement plan.

A first-level analysis resulted in a clustering of the actions aimed at determining emerging patterns, and showed the extent to which activities had already been addressed in existing operational planning initiatives. This process further revealed that the scope and depth of the formulation of the HEQC recommendations had been variable, with some being insular statements, and others being quite complex and nested. Links were provided in cases of substantive overlap and related issues so as to provide a thematic and coherent basis for a well designed improvement plan. Although the efficiency and sustainability of the tutor system emerged as the most critical area for improvement, followed by growth and expansion, the interdependencies and synergies between them were not made sufficiently explicit.

An endeavour was made through an in-depth analysis and scoping exercise to ensure that emerging responses were reformulated as improvement actions and initiatives, and to distil themes in response to current institutional realities and concerns. The 37 identified key actions for the Unisa improvement plan for the period 2010–2015 were organised according to the following 6 themes:

1. Strategic and sustainable repositioning (MLT)

2. The reconceptualisation of ODL teaching and learning (MLT)

   2.1 PQM revitalisation
   2.2 ODL staff development and delivery model

3. Organisational redesign and allocation of resources (SMT)

4. Improved system effectiveness and enhanced service delivery (SMT)

5. Governance structure redesign for the creation of a transformative, innovative and enabling environment (MLT)

6. Research and innovation (MLT)

Since community engagement had not been included within the formal HEQC audit process or the portfolio feedback, this component is dealt with as a separate component. The need to develop a quality management and assurance system has

been identified. Two additional interventions, namely the quality assurance of governance processes and advocacy work for persons with disabilities, have also been included in the final Unisa improvement plan.

The efforts made and the final plan make a sterling contribution to the development of a quality impact, monitoring and evaluation system for Unisa, which was the intended outcome of subjecting the institution to external scrutiny.