

Systemic approaches to enhance student success: What we are learning from the QEP

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The Quality Enhancement Project

Working with all higher education institutions to improve

STUDENT SUCCESS

“The enhancement of student learning with a view to producing an increased number of graduates with attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable.”

Where we are

2013 Focus areas selected

Enhancing:

1. Academics as teachers
2. Student support and development
3. The learning environment
4. Course and programme enrolment management

Sept 2014

Universities submitted baseline reports

Dec 2015

Universities submitted reports on improvements

2016

Individual institutional feedback visits, peer reviewer reports

What we are learning

*Emerging good
practices*

Enhancing academics as teachers

Report to the European Commission on Improving the quality of teaching and learning in Europe's higher education institutions, June 2013

There is no law of human nature that decrees that a good researcher is automatically a good teacher, or that a first class honours student in biochemistry with a brilliant PhD will, by some mysterious process, automatically be a good teacher of biochemistry. Academics working as teachers in the higher education sector are professional teachers, just like school teachers; and just like school teachers they need and benefit from specific training to do a good job pedagogically. This is all the more true as the student body is not only growing rapidly but is also becoming ever more diverse – in terms of cultural, economic and social backgrounds – and more demanding in terms of what students expect from their courses and their teachers.

There is a system to ensure and assure quality teaching

- Compulsory induction into university teaching for new academics of at least 6-12 months
- Evidence of teaching competence required for tenure, e.g. teaching portfolio
- Teaching quality monitored regularly through, e.g. student feedback, peer reviews, examiners' reports
- Development undertaken where improvement needed
- Continuous professional development available that does not clash with teaching times, included in workload
- Teaching quality is a requirement for promotion

- Workload model used that includes career stage, especially for young academics
- Contract and part-time staff participate in teaching development
- Discipline-based communities of practice and education research promoted
- Quality teaching and scholarship in T&L rewarded, e.g. in promotions, sabbaticals, awards, research and innovation grants

Enhancing student support and development

Once a university admits a student it has a moral obligation to do everything within its power to create an environment within which the student has a good chance of succeeding.

“Access without support is not opportunity”

[Vincent Tinto]

There is a university-wide strategy and framework guides student support and development efforts.

- Career guidance available, including online
- All new students are allocated a mentor
- University-wide programmes help students make transitions, e.g. school to first year (FYE) and final year to employment (SYE)
- University-wide system for monitoring student performance and early referral for at-risk students
- Dedicated student advisers, faculty ties

- Co-curricular activities are promoted and recognized, e.g. through a co-curricular transcript or record
- Academic literacies are developed in all students, e.g. through core curriculum or designated courses
- Student surveys are conducted and acted upon
- Community-building and support activities provided for both residence and day students

Enhancing the learning environment

The campus master plan is aligned to the teaching and learning strategy

- A committee or forum exists to discuss pedagogical needs with facilities and planning people
- There is a comprehensive inventory of teaching spaces and all teaching spaces are used optimally throughout the day, e.g through centralized venue timetabling
- There is an institutional ICT strategy that ensures that ICT provision is adequate and appropriate for T&L needs of staff and students and facilities are optimally used
- Universal Wi-Fi is available on campus and easily off-campus

- Ample learning spaces for flexible learning (individual and collaborative) are identified and developed across the institution and are part of the campus master plan, including outdoors
- Students have extensive access to learning spaces and resources (24/7 ideal)
- Libraries provide easy access to electronic learning resources on and off campus and staff to support information literacy and knowledge management
- ICTs (including e-learning) are incorporated into courses to enhance learning and flexibility
- All modules have a presence on an institution-wide learning management system that can be accessed on and off campus

Enhancing course and programme enrolment management

There is a coherent, data-informed, student-centred approach to managing student enrolment from recruitment to graduation

- Recruitment efforts include targeted, ongoing engagement with selected schools/ school children
- Students can easily track their applications online
- Integrated online system to apply for admissions, accommodation and financial aid
- Quick assistance available by phone, email, chat
- Notifications of application results sent out quickly
- Systems to monitor offers and registrations in real-time available

- Rule-based online registration coupled with curriculum advising
- Follow up done of non-returning eligible students
- Second-chance opportunities available, e.g. summer and winter schools
- Gateway courses monitored and interventions implemented where needed
- Student tracking system used for staff and students to track progress towards qualification and identify risk of exclusion
- Opportunities to change programmes if excluded from another programme

Key systemic enablers for student success in the QEP focus areas

- There is a system to ensure and assure quality teaching
- There is a university-wide strategy and framework to guide student support and development efforts
- The campus master plan is aligned to the teaching and learning strategy
- There is a coherent, data-informed, student-centred approach to managing student enrolment from recruitment to graduation

Ideas from yesterday's workshop

- Have a longer gap between end of school and beginning of academic year to advise and support students, sort out financial aid.
- Resources for training in institutional research, including data analytics and education. Need a post-grad qualification.
- Nationally negotiated prices for uniform MIS across the system
- Restructuring of university structures to promote student success
- Make national student data available
- Link SAAIR, SAHELA, Siyaphumelela, QEP initiatives to develop data analytics capacity in system



Expected outcomes of the QEP

- Benchmarks and codes of good practice for quality undergraduate provision
- Policy recommendations
- Tools and resources for improving student success
- Research
- Communities of practice



Raise the bar for what can be expected of institutions in promoting student success in future

