

Appendix 4: Faculty input relating to Recommendation 5 (postgraduate students)

Please note that Faculty contributions were collated to form the action plans contained in the Institutional Improvement Plan, and though some plans are specific to certain Faculties, all those contained in the IIP have the support, in principle, of the University.

Faculty of Education

The Education Faculty noted that the prelude to Recommendation 5 observed that "...the majority of postgraduate students in all programmes come from the rest of Africa...the Panel suggests that the university investigates the obstacles that prevent South Africa students from enrolling..." The School of Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty of Education has a student enrolment as displayed in Table 1. In each of the programmes it can be seen that, contrary to the findings of the HEQC Audit Report Number 23, the majority of the postgraduate students in the faculty is South Africans. Overall, 90% of the students are South Africans.

Table 1: Registered students by postgraduate programmes, 2009

Programme	RSA	International	Total Student	% RSA
B.Ed. (Hon)	86	0	86	100
M.Ed.	56	2	58	97
PhD	18	16	34	53
TOTAL	160	18	178	90

The Education Faculty therefore felt that the problem described in the report did not fully apply to Education; however, the current mode of delivering the postgraduate programmes in the faculty needed to be noted, as the BEd (Hons) programme is offered on a part-time basis only whilst the MEd and PhD are offered on both full- and part-time basis. Fifteen percent (15%) of MEd and PhD students are fulltime, and with the exception of one, all of these full-time students are international.

The plan is to increase the number of fulltime students in all programmes, as outlined below

Priority and justification	Resources needed	Action Plan	Time line	Responsible Person	Performance Indicator	Party to monitor sign off
Increase number of fulltime students in all programmes. • Increase FTEs • Increase throughputs	Bursaries for fulltime students	Write bursary proposals to funding agencies Develop a taught MEd (full-time)	2112 2015	HODs	Increased no. of students with bursaries in all programmes MEd programme accredited	Head of School/ Faculty
	Finance for up-scaling programme Marketing	Work with DMC to develop marketing strategy Enrol and attach students to funded projects	2110	HODs	Increased fulltime enrolment in programmes	Head of School/Faculty
	Attach students to 3 rd stream research projects	Write research project proposals to funding agencies	2111	HODs	At least one funded project	Head of School/Faculty
	Language and academic support	Up-scaling language and academic support services	2112	HODs	Increased throughputs	Head of School/Faculty

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

1. There should be an integrated and holistic strategy to educate, encourage and alert South African undergraduate students who are performing well and who demonstrate requisite academic ability, to available incentives, should they desire to pursue Post Graduate Studies. This should be done by Departments in conjunction with Faculty leadership. Although SENEX suggested identifying promising South African students at third-year level, the Faculty submits that this process should start at second year. This could heighten a sense of anticipation, competition, and performance – and that could be good for the academic health of any institution. Needless to say, it should be done in a transparent manner to avoid any possible negative consequences, such as accusations of favouritism.
2. Flagship Post Graduate programmes (Honours and Coursework Masters) should be advertised more widely with the concomitant framework of incentives spelt out.
3. Departments and Faculties should be more rigorous in the allocation of supervisory responsibility especially for Masters by full dissertation and doctoral theses. South African students could be avoiding UFH because the range of issues attendant on low throughput rates.

Faculty of Law

The Faculty proposes that in order to encourage participation by undergraduate students in publishing of articles, and introduce them to the conventions around postgraduate publishing, student-managed academic publications be produced in each Faculty.

To maximize awareness among potential postgraduate students, Faculty-specific postgraduate programme flyers should be developed by the Department of Marketing and Communication, advertising flagship programmes in each department.

Faculty of Science and Agriculture

Priority and justification	Resources needed	PoA Details	Time line	Responsible Party	Performance Indicator	Structure/Party to sign off
Medium, but strategic very important.	None	See below	Next 3 to 5 years	Deans, Foundation	Baseline data	Deans

Addressing the challenges of recruiting and retaining South African students for Masters and PhD studies has been high on the agenda of the Faculty of Science and Agriculture for a number of years. This is not an easy challenge to solve, and ways and means on how to approach this challenge are limited to a narrow band of opportunities and revolve mainly around bursaries/scholarships, and the available pool of high performing (60% +) final-year and Honours students within each discipline.

Pool Size: Currently, the Faculty of Science and Agriculture registers about 107 Honours students every year and maintains a very high throughput rate. Based on our experience the majority, or at least 50% of these students are South African. With the new HEQF levels (4th year in Agriculture & Nursing Science being equivalent to Honours level), the number of Honours students is closer to 150 or more. Based on assumption (i) 50% of Honours students are South African and (ii) 20% of Honours students are likely to proceed to Masters level, it is logical to expect 10 to 15 South African Honours graduates to proceed to Masters level. Currently 80 Masters students are registered, with an average completion time of 3 yrs, which requires a replacement rate of about 25 to 30 per annum. It is therefore not unreasonable to expect that South African students should make-up 50% of Masters and 30% of PhD students in the Faculty.

Postgraduate Support Programme: Mindful of the lack of survey/research data on the issue and the complexity and diversity of the situation, domestic or family issues are amongst the primary reasons for the low recruitment and retention rate of South African Masters and PhD students.

In addition, many BSc and BSc Honours students are lured into government and the private sector by highly lucrative salaries, with many of our Honours students being offered managerial positions or at least management training positions.

Family pressure on final-year and Honours students to find a job and start contributing to the household income has consistently been cited as the main reason for not continuing further postgraduate studies.

This has also been the main reason why Masters students would terminate or put on hold their studies after completing their field-work, hence the high attrition rate amongst postgraduate students. Unfortunately, a mere bursary and/or tuition waiver - irrespective of the value - will not address this challenge for at least the next decade or longer. In our view, the only long-term solution would be a government supported postgraduate programme via part-time employment.

It should be added that the University needs to explore more active collaborations with industry where students are encouraged to complete MSc or PhD programmes with good bursaries from industry and a possible guaranteed job offer after completion of the degree. This policy was implemented at Rhodes in the late 1980s and 1990 by developing a strong partnership with mining companies and top students were offered bursaries, with students offered employment after completion of their studies.

The strategy in place before and after 1994 in the field of Agriculture was the secondment agreement between government departments and universities, but arrangements for students appear to be inadequate and there is an absence of formal agreements between the University and the government department. The problem with part-time students who receive bursaries from their respective departments to study is that their study programmes are not prioritised by their employers, so they are not relieved from any of their duties, and are expected to deliver on all. Some local postgraduate level students are government employees, and often these are the ones who do not complete as they cannot attend classes or submit assignments due to demands at work. They nonetheless write – and then often fail – exams, after which they re-register and continue in this way until they give up their studies completely

The problem with secondment is the absence of a formal contract between the employee (student) and the employer, stipulating the conditions of the agreement e.g. time of study (2 years for Masters), the minimum time the student is required to work after completion of studies, etc.

There is also no contract between the government department and educational institution, so that, for example, students work on a research topic of relevance to the employer. Students continue to get a salary from the employer, which is positive, but there needs to be a structured agreement concerning what the student is researching. This idea was successfully applied in the 1960's & 1970's in South Africa and across the globe. It is proposed that government departments appoint 1st and 2nd degree students on a performance-based programme whilst completing M and PhD degrees.

What to do and who should do it?

- Approach relevant government departments or industry for support.

Based on the numerous institutions and companies in the field of Science and Agriculture, it is estimated that at least 10 such scholarships can be obtained, of 5 years, which is 50% of the required number of new South African Masters students per year.

- Establish a faculty based fund (trust).

Interest could be to be used to employ high performance South African students as junior lecturers or “research assistants” while they complete their Honours or Masters degrees.

- Identify qualified academic staff with PhD degrees who can attract additional research funding and attract undergraduate students to register as Masters and PhD students in that particular area.

Faculty of Management and Commerce

1. Each department must identify potential students at third year level and encourage them to enrol at the university after their graduation.
2. The university should set aside bursaries and scholarships available for all South Africans who enrol for postgraduate programmes, to be followed by incentives such as offering employment as tutors, students assistance and mentors, to prevent exit to seek employment.
3. The university should enter into agreement and partnership with prospective employers to place the students in companies while they are studying. This will motivate students to remain at the university, assured of potential employment after finishing their degrees.
4. The role of lecturers who teach at third year level should be to inspire students to continue to postgraduate training and education. Lecturers should nurture, counsel and mentor potential students.
5. The university must improve the residential environment as well as safety and security, and develop the postgraduate village to retain UG students and attract other students at PG level. Residences must be built to offer comfort as well as facilities for research.
6. Departments should develop skills of PG students in the research methodology module, exposing them to innovations and involving them in research project and debates.
7. On the recruitment side, a suitable prospectus must be produced; the careers exhibition must be utilised and websites maintained and updated. Information about programmes must be available through all media.
8. The university must make use of its prominent alumni and convocates to attract potential PG students. UFH has a strong heritage and brand, and we must maximise this.
9. PG students must also be encouraged to recruit students, and serve as role models to other students. As a way of giving incentives to these students an allowance must be given to them when they go out on the recruitment drive.
10. Departments must build internal capacity to accommodate academic programmes at postgraduate level to attract and retain postgraduate students. UFH must not become a colony of other universities and it is important to build internal expertise.
11. Academic support staff must create a positive environment for potential students by practising effective customer care principles. Admissions and registration enquiries must be dealt with quickly and efficiently and enquirees must be treated with respect and courtesy.
12. The university recruitment team could organise dinners and breakfast sessions with potential postgrad students and engage them on various topics of interest.

13. Affiliation with renowned international Universities (Oxford, Cambridge, Wharton, Cranfield, Harvard etc) should be developed by UFH.
This will give the opportunity to our students to spend part of their research period overseas, in a reputable institution.
14. Government could introduce a sign-on fee for SA students wishing to pursue higher degrees, so that they graduate with a promised reward per seniority of degree, e.g. R20,000 for MSc, R30,000 for MPhil, R50,000 for PhD, on condition that they sign a retention contract with the university for a minimum period of service thereafter.
15. Cross-postings and international sabbatical should be arranged by UFH for research associates.
16. To attract quality students, a student-friendly learning environment that offers necessary facilities and support is important. In developing such a learning environment we need to be innovative, leading the way in developing learning programmes matching 21th century African realities, whilst being ready to learn from the experience of others. Relevance, interactivity and attractiveness of the campus are critical.
 - a. Relevance refers to life experience and while it should have a high degree of academic credibility, should not be theoretical, abstract and divorced from life experiences. Rather, it should excite students with the potential for change and making a difference to society.
 - b. An interactive environment is one in which students are encouraged to ask questions of the teacher and engage in debate with one another. In short, it should be a learning community in which both teacher and learner have active roles.
 - c. We live in a social environment that is image-saturated. A learning environment that is wholly text based is not student-friendly. Lecturers must learn to make use of visual images to support and reinforce the text message.
17. High quality research requires a high level of critical and creative thinking. We must develop programmes for our research students that nurture these qualities to subject existing theories and practices to testing and to develop new, improved theories and practices.
18. With this end in view we should not wait until students are finishing their undergraduate studies before identifying those with these qualities. Separate classes can be offered to those displaying the potential for postgraduate studies at an early stage.