

CHED and Institutional Planning Department

The aims of the Teaching and Learning Report are:

- To report on trends, with regard to student profiles and outputs, and academic staffing in fulfilment of accountability obligations;
- To promote continuous improvement in teaching practice and the quality of the student experience, through profiling exemplars of good teaching practice;
- To report on interventions designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning; and
- To report student feedback on the quality of teaching.

aimed at improving teaching and the learning experience;

- increased student involvement in the processes of improving teaching and learning, reflected in the (admittedly uneven) student perspectives recorded in this report; and
- the work that has been done – and continues to be done – in the University's Quality Improvement Plan (UNIQUIP), which arose from the institutional audit conducted by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) in 2005.

The report covers diverse aspects of a multi-layered subject. Four highlights are:

- Improved success rates in most areas;
 - the extent and maturity of institutional projects

But there are some major challenges. While completion rates are good in South African terms, they are still not good in absolute terms; and there is an increasing divide between the completion rates of white and black students, which we need to address – and are addressing. And although awards for teaching (the Distinguished Teacher Award, in particular) are well established and enjoy a high profile, the perception exists that teaching continues to lag behind research as an activity that may be rewarded. Also problematic is that institutional projects aimed at improving teaching do not reach all staff.

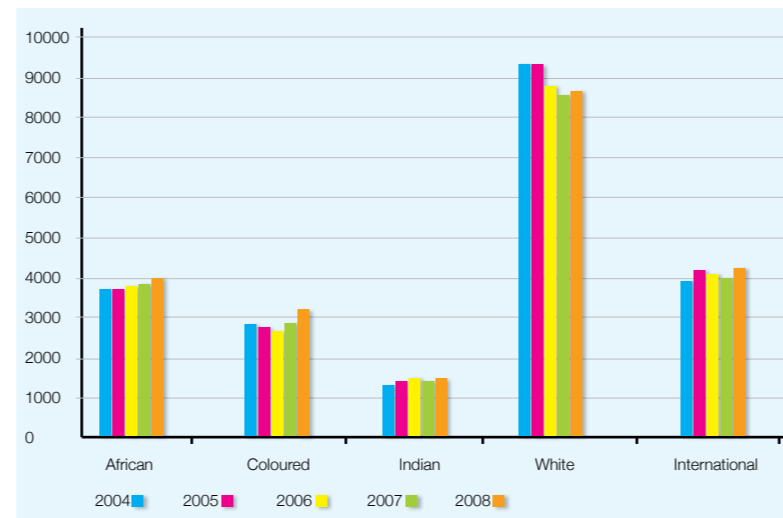


The shape and size of UCT

A total of 22 608 students (16 123 undergraduates and 6 485 postgraduates) enrolled at UCT in 2008. The 2008 enrolment represented a 5.5% increase on the 2007 figure, exceeding the former 2005 peak by 666 students. The postgraduate proportion of the enrolment (including the postgraduate diploma and honours level) remained steady at 28% of the total.

South African (SA) black, coloured and Indian students together made up 40% (39% in 2007) of the total enrolment,

and just over 50% of the South African student enrolment. The proportional enrolment of international students remained stable at 19%, while that of South African white students dropped by 5 percentage points, to 39%, between 2004 and 2008. At the undergraduate level, SA black, coloured and Indian students made up 44% of the total (42% in 2007); the proportion of white undergraduates dropped by 6%, to 37%, between 2004 and 2008. At the postgraduate level, white and international students together made up 67% of the enrolment in 2008 (69% in 2007).



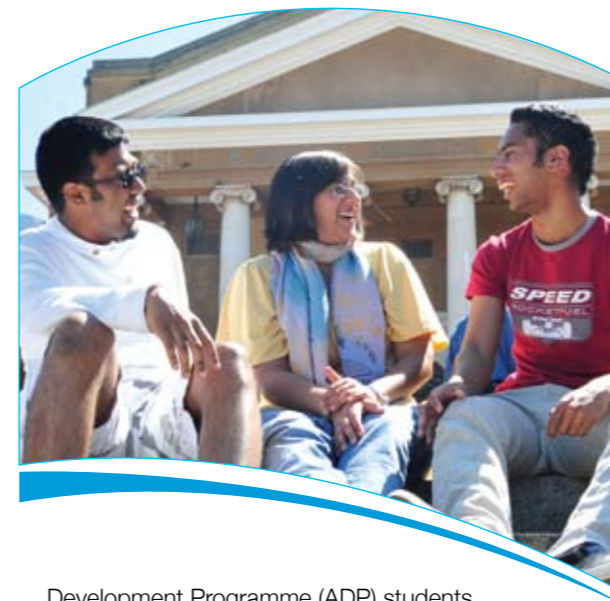
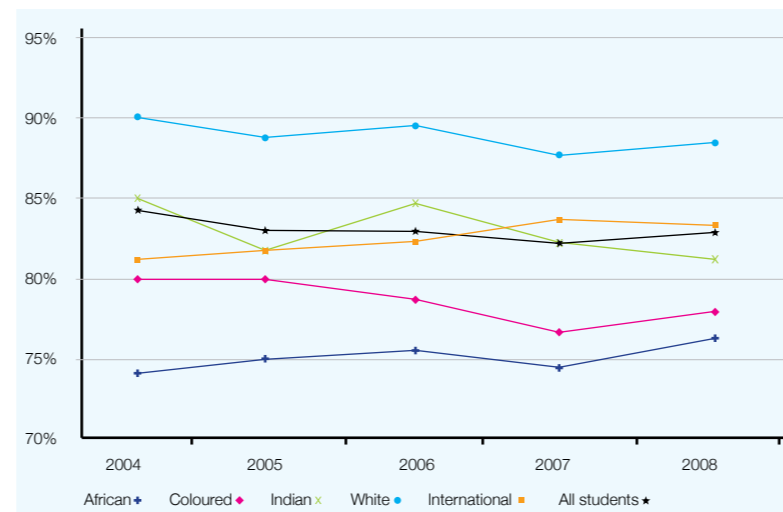
The UNIQUIP for 2007–2010 identified the following indicators for assessing the success of UCT's plan with regard to teaching and learning:

- Improved throughput rate at undergraduate and postgraduate levels
- Improved success rate for black students
- Improved levels of performance from Academic

These indicators have been used to assess improvement in Teaching and Learning performance.

Success rates

The overall undergraduate course success rate in 2008 was 85.4% in 2007, UCT's undergraduate course success rate of 85.5% was the highest in the sector. In 2008 the overall success rate in undergraduate courses at the important 100-level recovered to the 2006 level of 83%. Similarly, the success rates in 2008 level-200 courses recovered to the 2006 level of 85%. However, course success rates at the 300-level dropped by two percentage points to 88% in 2008. The decline of 10% in 300-level law courses is of particular concern. The success rate in 400-level courses dropped by six percentage points to 88% in 2008. The decline of 11% in humanities course successes at the 400 level is of concern.



Development Programme (ADP) students

- Improved retention rates
- Improved evaluations by students and departments
- Improved level of satisfaction of students regarding the student evaluation system
- Improved satisfaction level of graduates and their employers with the quality of UCT's programmes

There has been a progressive improvement in the success rates of 100- and 200-level courses among black, coloured and Indian students. The success rates at this level among black and coloured students have almost converged (76% among black students and 78% among coloured students in 2008). In 2008, the difference between white (at the upper extreme) and black (at the lower extreme) success rates at the 100 level was 13% (down from 16% in 2004). At the 200 level, this difference was 18% (17% in 2004). However, there has been a significant decline of 9% in the 400-level course success rates, and a 2% decline in the 300-level course success rates, among black students.

Cohort completion rates across the 2000-2004 entry cohorts varied widely in relation to entry faculty and race. A significant improvement was seen in the Bachelor of Social Science programme in the Faculty of Humanities. The gap between white and black student completion rates was markedly larger within the 2004 cohort than in prior years: 81% of the white first-time undergraduate (FU) cohort (up from 79% of the 2003 cohort), in comparison with 55% of the black FU intake (down from 61% of the 2003 cohort), had completed a qualification by the end of 2008. The decline of 11% in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment (EBE) is particularly significant. This differential therefore increased from 18%, in relation to the 2003 cohort, to 26% in respect of the 2004 cohort. However, 9%

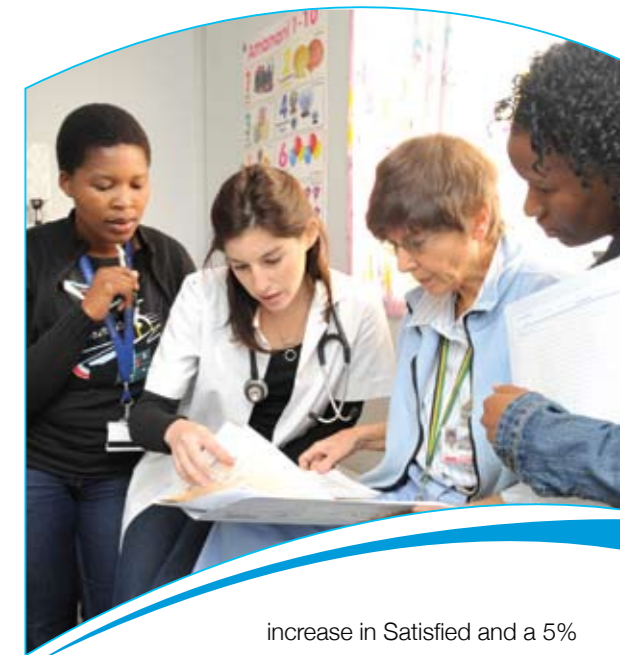
of the 2004 black cohort was still busy with undergraduate studies in 2009, bringing the potential completion rate within the cohort up to 64%. The alarming increase in the different completion rates of black and white students, from 18% to 26% between 2003 and 2004, is of major concern.

Longitudinal performance within the extended programmes varied widely by year and by programme: no clear trends emerged in any of these programmes. Thirty-three percent of the 2004 intake had completed a qualification by the end of 2008, and 17% were still busy with their studies in 2009. The potential completion rate within the overall 2004 extended programme cohort is therefore 50%. The cumulative academic exclusion rate of 41% is high.

The 2002 to 2006 new intakes of master's and doctoral students were tracked until the completion of the 2007 academic year. Sixty percent of the 2002 master's intake and 63% of the 2003 intake had graduated by the end of 2007. By the end of 2007, 60% of the 2002 doctoral entry cohort had completed their studies, and 9% were still busy.

These data suggest that many of the interventions being introduced by faculties for first-year students are beginning to have an effect. These interventions include the extension of mentorship programmes, the expansion of Vula, improved follow-up on student concerns as a result of the introduction of the web-based course evaluation tool, and the increased use of 'hotseats'.

There were some notable shifts within faculties and qualification types when respondents were asked, in the Annual Graduate Exit Surveys, to indicate their satisfaction with their overall learning experience at UCT. For the three-year Bachelor of Commerce respondents, there was an 8% decrease in Very Satisfied, paralleled by a 9% increase in Satisfied. EBE shows a shift of 6% fewer respondents indicating Somewhat Satisfied and 9% more respondents choosing Very Satisfied. In the Faculty of Health Sciences, there is a shift of a 7% increase in Very Satisfied to a 5% decrease in Satisfied. In EBE, there was a 21% decrease in Very Satisfied, while at the same time there was a 16%



increase in Satisfied and a 5% increase in Somewhat Satisfied. Respondents from the Faculty of Science showed an increase in Very Satisfied of 6%, and a 5% increase in respondents not indicating their satisfaction at all with studying at UCT; paralleled by a decrease in Satisfied of 9%. Overall, the honours respondents showed a 7% decrease in Very Satisfied and a 5% increase in Satisfied. These results suggest that in our efforts to meet the needs of our diverse student body more effectively, students on the extremes with very particular needs may not be as satisfied as they were previously.

For the Employed category there was an increase of 6% in EBE professional bachelor students stating Employed as their first destination. At the honours level there was an increase in the percentage of Faculty of Commerce students seeking to study or already enrolled for study, and among EBE honours students there was a significant increase in the number of students seeking employment and a decrease in the number already employed, suggesting that the recession may be having an impact on the ability of certain categories of students to find employment. As a result, a higher percentage of this category of students is seeking further study to increase their marketability.

Student faculty councils

Reports submitted by the student faculty councils in August 2009 suggest that several of the problems identified at a workshop in March 2009 about the teaching and learning experience in 2008 have been addressed by the faculty deans. Feedback from the student faculty councils indicates that the students recognise that significant improvements have been made in improving the quality of tutoring at UCT. However, they have identified the need for more consistency in the conditions of service for tutors, and

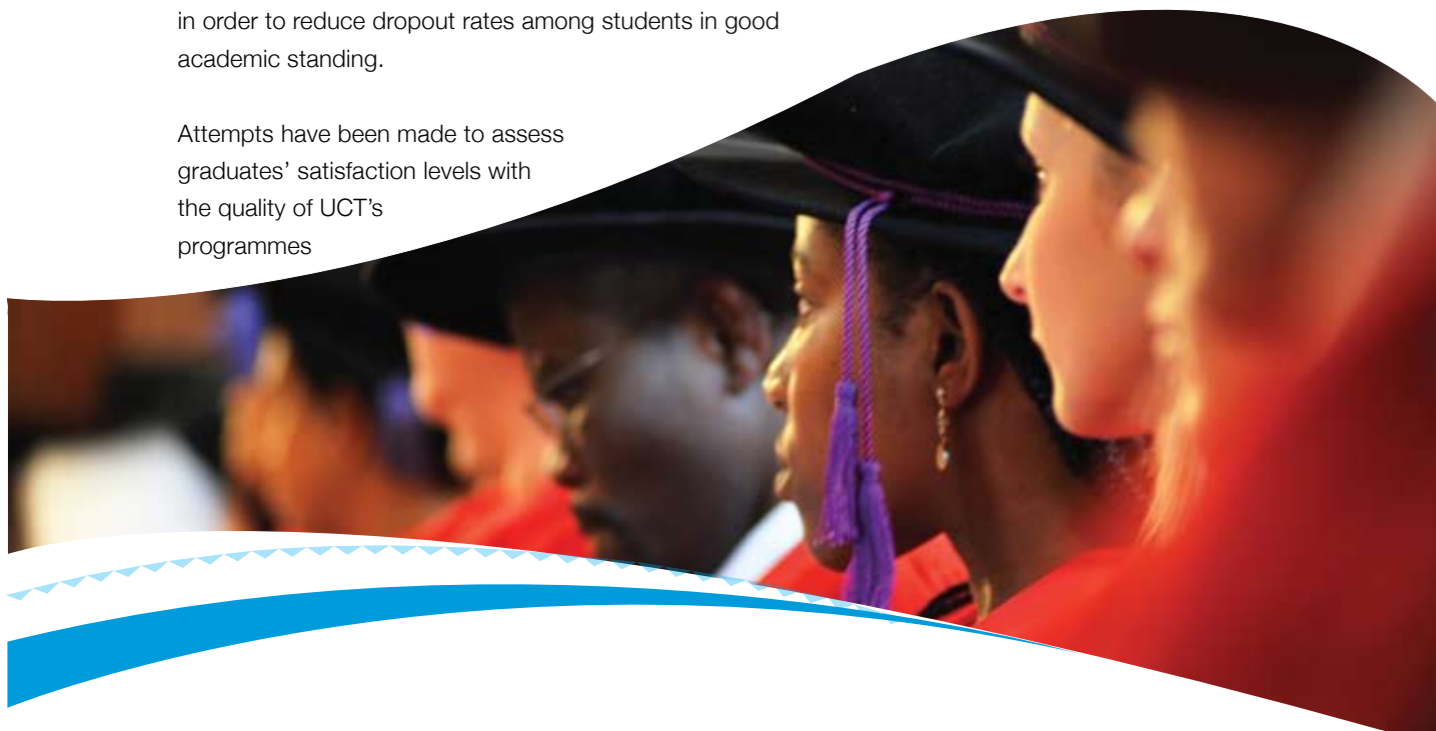
for more training to be given to tutors on how to increase levels of participation in tutorials and how to manage issues related to diversity. The students have also proposed that we strengthen early-warning systems so that students at risk can be identified before June examinations. Proposals have been made for promoting multilingualism more actively among the student population, and increasing levels of support for those for whom English is an additional or foreign language.

Most of the faculty councils have commented on the poor communication between faculty councils and class representatives, and the reluctance of students to become class representatives. Two faculties have introduced incentives to motivate more students to become class representatives. It appears from the student feedback that the web-based course evaluations are working well. Proposals have been made by the students for the tool to be used across the university. The students have also expressed a desire for some form of orientation to continue throughout the first year so that students become better acclimatised to university life. Students have pointed to the need to strengthen curriculum advice in order to reduce dropout rates among students in good academic standing.

Attempts have been made to assess graduates' satisfaction levels with the quality of UCT's programmes

changing needs. These include postgraduate programmes in applied linguistics and African languages, nuclear engineering, paediatric radiology and community eye health, and Advanced Certificates in Education in Science and Life Orientation.

New specialisations offered include Computer Forensics, Enterprise Systems, Training and Evaluation, Monitoring and Programme Evaluation, Mathematical Finance, and ICT in Education. A major review of the curricula in the Allied and Health Professional programmes took place, with assistance from the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED). The Faculty of Commerce



through Graduate Career Path surveys, but the response rate thus far has been too poor to allow conclusions to be drawn. However, the 2008 Report of the South African Graduate Recruitment Survey stated that the highest level of employers' recruitment activities on campuses was 92% at the University of Cape Town, and at the University of Johannesburg. This result suggests that UCT graduates continue to be sought after.

Several interventions have been designed to improve the quality of postgraduate teaching. The need for support for postgraduate students is likely to grow as a result of the growth in the number of international and adult/professional postgraduate students, particularly for speakers of English as an additional or foreign language.

During 2008 a number of new academic programmes were introduced to enhance UCT's responsiveness to

introduced a six-week Skills for Commerce course that is designed to contribute to the development of a set of attributes which the faculty believes all commerce graduates should possess on exit.

While we applaud the many individual and even collective efforts (many of which are reported above) to advance the quality of teaching and learning in this institution, it is also appropriate to pause and reflect on ways in which we can improve on addressing the challenges identified in this report, particularly with regard to narrowing the differential cohort success rates between white and black students, improving course success rates at the 300 and 400 levels, and reducing the dropout rate of students of good academic standing and doctoral students. Much work still needs to be done in terms of analysing student performance at programme and course level as a basis for systematic developmental work.

COLLABORATIVE AND DISTINGUISHED TEACHER AWARDS

Distinguished Teacher Award

The Distinguished Teacher Award (DTA) is the highest accolade given to teaching staff at all levels within the university, and recognises excellent teaching. Through the focus award UCT acknowledges the primary focus of teaching and learning in the university's work. The award has been in existence since 1982. In 2008, three awards were made to the following staff:

- Mannus Justin O'Riain, senior lecturer in the Department of Zoology;
- Vanessa Marguerite Everson, senior lecturer in French in the School of Languages & Literatures;
- Leonard Cowper Smith, senior lecturer in the School of Economics and Centre for Higher Education and Development.

CHED award for Collaborative Educational Practice

The Centre for Higher Education (CHED) award for Collaborative Educational Practice (CEP) was launched in 2007. It is open to groups of two or more UCT staff members who have collaborated on a particular project to enhance the teaching and learning environment. The aims of the award are:

- To recognise and promote collaborative approaches to enhancing the teaching and learning environment;
- To provide additional resources for groups of academics to innovate in their teaching programmes and courses;
- To publicise successful collaborative projects as examples of good practice in developing teaching and learning; and
- To assist in developing and articulating the research-led nature of the teaching and learning approaches employed.

In 2008 only one award was made, to the project headed by Terri Grant and Claudia Kalil (left and right in picture) in the Professional Communication Unit PCU, School of Management Studies, Faculty of Commerce. The initiative used scenario learning to enhance students' communicative competence, specifically in writing.

The thinking behind introducing a PCU component to the third-year computer science course (CSC3002F) in the mid-90s was a departmental concern at the overall communicative incompetence of these generally technically talented students. Growing student numbers university-

wide, coupled with increased student diversity and concomitant English as Second Language (ESL) concerns had resulted in a more serious situation. The department wished to address the full range of communication problems, but with a specific focus on writing skills, which they felt were particularly poor.

In this project/initiative, the collaborative interplay of various methods and media, (a characteristic of scenario learning), helps to minimise individual weaknesses – good news for ESL students. As the teams are small and each member has a very distinct role and responsibility, the disadvantages of group work – in which where some members do little and get away with it, especially in large groups – can also be minimised.



TEACHING AND LEARNING REPORT 2008