

# The Further Development of Postgraduate Studies at Rhodes: Creating an Agenda

10 May 2011 (Final Draft)

## Introduction

This document critically reflects on the domain of postgraduate studies at Rhodes University in order to contribute to an agenda for possible future postgraduate development.

It is an invitation to think systemically, more systematically and strategically about postgraduate studies at Rhodes, and its purpose is to ground a conversation in different University fora and structures on institutional goals, strategies and planning with respect to postgraduate studies.

It is hoped that discussion will lead to:

1. The Institutional Planning Committee, Faculty Boards and Senate developing a shared agenda of institutional goals, strategies and planning in relation to postgraduate studies in the future
2. The University proactively, democratically, effectively and efficiently making institutional choices and decisions, with a full grasp of the academic, administrative, infrastructural and financial implications of these choices and decisions
3. The University systematically and timeously pursuing and implementing decisions that are made, and strategies and plans that are adopted.

## Context

Abrams writes that 'what people do in the present (is) struggle to create a future *out* of the past'; in doing this, 'the past is not just the womb of the present but the only raw material out of which the present can be constructed' (1982:8). Moreover, 'what we choose to do and what we have to do are shaped by the historically given possibilities among which we find ourselves.' (ibid.,:3) - as an institution we operate 'within the framework of possibilities and constraints' (Keane and Mier, 1989:4).

While there are, and there will continue to be, 'constraints', with regard to the further development of postgraduate studies at Rhodes, there are also promising and exciting 'possibilities' for building on the present relatively solid foundations.

For many good reasons we have committed ourselves as part of our enrolment and academic planning, and overall institutional planning, to increase in coming years the numbers of our postgraduates and their proportion relative to our total student body.

Compared to 1 840 (26%) postgraduates in 2010, it is hoped that in 2011 2 018 out of 7 390 students will be postgraduates. More specifically, that 834 postgraduates will be Honours and Postgraduate Diploma students, 844 will be Masters students and 330 will be Doctoral

students. In 2012 our target for postgraduate students is 29% (2 204 students) and in 2013 30% (2 273 students).

The table below, which is derived from our 2011-2013 Enrolment Plan, indicates our envisaged growth.

Table 1: Current and Projected Postgraduate Enrolments, 2010-2013

Programme	2010	2011	2012	2013	Growth % 2010-2013
Honours/PGD's	752	834	966	987	31%
Masters	764	844	882	912	19%
Doctorate	324	340	356	374	15%
Total	1840	2018	2204	2273	24%
<b>% of Student Body</b>	26	27	29	30	

The number and proportion of our postgraduates is a positive feature of Rhodes, and makes us distinctive among South African universities. It also creates a solid foundation for pursuing a trajectory of becoming more postgraduate over time.

Postgraduates play an important role at Rhodes and contribute in at least 5 ways. First, they serve as tutors, and thus support academic programmes and contribute to undergraduate student development. Of course, this is also a valuable mechanism for postgraduates to advance their own intellectual and scholarly development. Second, postgraduates serve as role models for undergraduates, inspiring them to consider postgraduate study. Third, they act as catalysts of the production of new knowledge through hopefully inspiring and innovating new and fresh approaches to the development of knowledge and through helping to push knowledge production into new areas. Fourth, postgraduates can also provide valuable support to our leading scholars and researchers, assisting them in their research in various ways and also going on to become their collaborators. Finally, postgraduates are also potentially apprentice academics and the next and new generations of scholars and researchers.

Table 2 indicates the proportion of postgraduates at various South African universities.

Table 2: Postgraduate Numbers and Proportions at South African Universities, 2009

University	Hon/PG Dip	Masters	Doctorate	Number PG	Proportion PG %
University of Stellenbosch	3731	4698	993	9422	37
University of Pretoria	11951	5678	1443	19072	34
University of Witwatersrand	2503	5417	1045	8965	31
University of Cape Town	2506	3303	1058	6867	29
University of the Free State	4674	2247	591	7512	28
North West University	9225	2591	792	12608	25
<b>Rhodes University</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>1657</b>	<b>24</b>
University of Kwazulu-Natal	3146	3957	1141	8244	21
University of the Western Cape	1490	1419	423	3332	21
University of Limpopo	1162	1659	138	2959	18
University of Fort Hare	698	608	227	1533	15
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	1608	1468	392	3468	14
University of Johannesburg	4117	1788	559	6464	13

University of South Africa	23562	4711	754	29027	11
University of Zululand	909	370	156	1435	11
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	939	753	127	1819	6
Central University of Technology	292	197	52	541	4
Walter Sisulu University	663	309	21	993	4
Tshwane University of Technology	160	962	169	1291	2
Durban University of Technology	0	300	66	366	2
Vaal University of Technology	30	150	23	203	1
Mangosuthu University of Technology	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>74495</b>	<b>43723</b>	<b>10529</b>	<b>128747</b>	<b>15</b>

Table 3 represent analyses the data in table 2 in terms of through flows at the postgraduate level.<sup>1</sup>

Table 3a: Ratio of Honours to Masters to PhD enrolments

University	Hons	Masters	PhD	Masters as % of Hons	PhD as % of Hons	PhD as % of Masters	Ratio of Hons to Masters to PhD		
							Hons	Masters	PhD
Stellenbosch	3731	4698	993	126	27	21	1	1.26	0.27
Pretoria	11951	5678	1443	48	12	25	1	0.48	0.12
Wits	2503	5417	1045	216	42	19	1	2.16	0.42
Cape Town	2506	3303	1058	132	42	32	1	1.32	0.42
Free State	4674	2247	591	48	13	26	1	0.48	0.13
North West	9225	2591	792	28	9	31	1	0.28	0.09
<b>Rhodes</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>271</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1.11</b>	<b>0.41</b>

These data are open to varied interpretations. With respect to *Masters as a % of Honours*, the low percentages at Free State and North West probably indicate a poor carry through from Honours to Masters. (But why is the percentage low for Pretoria? Is it because they have so many Honours students?) The very high percentage at Wits either indicates that the vast majority of Honours students carry on to Masters OR that the numbers of Masters Students is swollen by large numbers of new students coming to Wits for Masters study. In so far as *PhD as a % of Honours* is concerned, three Universities have a percentage of about 40%, and the rest are a lot lower. With regard to *PhD as a % of Masters*, Rhodes has the highest percentage – what does this mean? Probably two things; firstly that we attract a lot of PhD students from outside Rhodes and secondly that quite a lot of our Masters students continue to do PhDs. Finally, with respect to the *ratios of Honours: Masters: PhD*, this suggests that Wits has a very high number of Masters students (why should this be?); that Stellenbosch, Cape Town and Rhodes have similar proportions of Masters students to Honours students; and that Wits, Cape Town and Rhodes have similar proportions of PhD students to Honours students.

<sup>1</sup> Tables 3a and 3b and the associated analysis is by Prof. Bernard

These ratios may make more sense if they are expressed the other way around (PhD: Masters: Honours)

Table 3b: PhDs to Masters to Honours

University	PhD	Masters	Honours
Stellenbosch	1	4.7	3.8
Pretoria	1	3.9	8.3
Wits	1	5.2	2.4
Cape Town	1	3.1	2.4
Free State	1	3.8	7.9
North West	1	3.3	11.6
<b>Rhodes</b>	1	2.7	2.4

It is likely that there are some fairly standard ratios which may be difficult to exceed. At the moment, we are close to Cape Town and differ from Wits and Stellenbosch in terms of the relative size of the Masters group.

What does this mean for growing the numbers of postgraduate students? If we assume that the path from Honours through Masters to the PhD represents a supply chain, then it look as if we are already doing as well as Wits and Cape Town. This could suggest that we are unlikely to increase the number of PhD students without increasing the number of Honours students. Wits and Stellenbosch do better at converting Honours students into Masters students, but not as well at converting Masters to PhDs. Our new postgraduate focus areas should attract Masters and PhD students from other universities but it looks as if we will need to grow the base of students at the Honours level.

Table 4 provides details about the social and national composition of our postgraduates.

Table 4: 2010 Rhodes Postgraduates by 'Race', Sex and Nationality

Programme	Indian		African		Coloured		White		Total	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
Honours/PGD's	5	8	137	173	9	26	184	201	335	408
Masters	15	15	191	184	14	15	146	198	366	412
Doctorate	9	15	97	57	7	10	70	69	183	151
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>971</b>
% South African	69	79	44	53	93	75	92	91	68	74
% International	31	21	56	47	7	25	8	9	32	26

In 2010 52% of our postgraduates were women. 53% were black and \*\*% were black South Africans. 29% were international students, from over 36 countries around the world.

As table 5 shows, the vast majority of international students - \*\*% - are from counties in the rest of Africa, with large numbers from Zimbabwe and Namibia (the Namibians are not all physically present at Rhodes).

Table 5: 2010 National Origins of Rhodes International Postgraduates

Country	Honours/PGD's	Masters	Doctorate	Total	% PG
ZIMBABWE	60	94	43	197	11
NAMIBIA	82	26	7	115	6
ZAMBIA	4	19	3	26	1
NIGERIAN	1	8	15	24	1
BOTSWANA	4	13	3	20	1
UGANDA	2	6	9	17	1
MALAWI	3	8	4	15	1
KENYA	4	4	7	15	1
BRITAIN	4	6	2	12	1
LESOTHO	2	6	3	11	1
SWAZILAND	2	3	2	7	0
AMERICA	2	3	2	7	0
GHANA	0	2	5	7	0
TANZANIA	0	4	3	7	0
CAMEROON	2	4	0	6	0
MAURITIUS	0	3	2	5	0
GERMANY	0	1	3	4	0
CANADIA	1	2	1	4	0
UNKNOWN/OTHER COUNTRY	0	4	0	4	0
MOZAMBIQUE	1	0	3	4	0
CONGO	2	1	1	4	0
ETHIOPIA	0	1	3	4	0
RUSSIA	1	2	0	3	0
OTHER EUROPEAN	0	3	0	3	0
ITALY	0	1	1	2	0
AUSTRALIA	0	2	0	2	0
OTHER AFRICAN	0	1	1	2	0
INDIA	0	0	1	1	0
TOGO	0	0	1	1	0
IRELAND	1	0	0	1	0
BELGIUM	0	1	0	1	0
PORTUGAL	1	0	0	1	0
CHINA	0	1	0	1	0
ROMANIA	1	0	0	1	0
BRAZIL	0	1	0	1	0
SPAIN	0	0	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>29</b>

The presence of postgraduates from numerous countries in the rest of Africa and from other continents is a welcome and healthy feature of Rhodes. It helps to make us more cosmopolitan, contributes to the intellectual and social diversity of Rhodes, and enriches our institutional culture.

In so far as the sources of our postgraduates are concerned, the table below illustrates the proportions of postgraduates that are recruited from outside of Rhodes University.

Table 6: Honours, masters and doctoral students that are recruited from other universities, 2005-2011

Year	Honours	Masters	Doctoral
2005	19	19	9
2006	16	16	13
2007	24	19	10
2008	15	15	18
2009	24	20	14
2010	18	14	16
2011	16	17	19

Over the 2005-2011 period, the proportion of Masters students coming to Rhodes from other universities has remained more or less stable. The proportion of doctoral students has doubled, while that of Honours has declined, from an especial high of 24% in 2009.

There are other aspects of Rhodes that are also conducive to an enhanced postgraduate trajectory.

First, we are a highly research active university. As Table 7 below illustrates, we possess the third best research output per capita staff member.

Table 7: Research Outputs and at South African Universities, 2007-2009

University	Weighted Research Outputs			Per Capita
	2007	2008	2009	2009
University of Stellenbosch	1641	1859	2016	2.3
University of Cape Town	1834	1856	2034	2.1
<b>Rhodes University</b>	<b>549</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>1.6</b>
University of Witwatersrand	1615	1496	1496	1.5
University of Pretoria	2162	2219	2223	1.4
University of Kwazulu-Natal	1524	1690	1690	1.2
North West University	1061	1091	1190	1.2
University of Johannesburg	760	884	961	1.1
University of the Western Cape	448	482	584	1.1
University of the Free State	895	768	768	1
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	437	497	477	0.8
University of Fort Hare	140	165	292	0.8
University of South Africa	922	863	939	0.7
University of Zululand	143	127	127	0.5
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	129	174	265	0.4
Tshwane University of Technology	232	269	269	0.3
University of Limpopo	268	210	210	0.3
Central University of Technology	78	65	65	0.3
Durban University of Technology	77	70	98	0.2
Vaal University of Technology	33	29	29	0.1
Walter Sisulu University	19	25	25	0
Mangosuthu University of Technology	1	2	4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15243</b>	<b>15344</b>	<b>16264</b>	<b>1.0</b>

Second, as Table 8 below reflects, our academics are formally highly qualified relative to other South African universities. 52% of our academics have Doctorates and 30% Masters degrees.

Table 8: Qualifications among Academic Staff at South African Universities, 2009

University	Qualifications (%)		
	Honours	Masters	Doctorate
University of Cape Town	5	31	57
University of Stellenbosch	5	26	56
University of Witwatersrand	5	33	53
<b>Rhodes University</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>52</b>
University of the Western Cape	5	38	46
North West University	10	34	46
University of the Free State	8	41	42
University of Kwazulu-Natal	4	31	39
University of Pretoria	10	36	36
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	8	28	34
University of South Africa	10	25	34
University of Zululand	16	33	33
University of Fort Hare	14	25	25
University of Johannesburg	0	26	24
University of Limpopo	10	47	21
Central University of Technology	7	27	19
Tshwane University of Technology	7	26	15
Vaal University of Technology	10	27	14
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	7	31	11
Durban University of Technology	8	28	10
Walter Sisulu University	8	28	9
Mangosuthu University of Technology	14	41	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>34</b>

The table below indicates the numbers and percentage of Rhodes academics with PhD's.

Table 9: Rhodes Academics with PhDs by Faculty, 2010

Academics	Humanities	Commerce	Education	Law	Science	Pharmacy	Total
Number	132	44	19	16	92	17	320
With PhD	70	13	11	4	69	11	178
<b>% With PhD</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>56</b>

In so far as research outputs (peer-reviewed accredited publications and postgraduate students graduated) are concerned, the following situation prevails currently.

Rhodes produced 3.9% of the national research output in the form of publications (350.99 accredited units in 2009 from a national total of 9109.34 units). The overall publication output has grown at a rate higher than the national average (20.3 % in 2008 and 6.4 % in 2009), but the overall postgraduate graduation output has declined over this same period, largely because of swings in doctoral graduations.

Although Rhodes achieves well above the DHET's 1.25 unit per academic benchmark, only one-third of academics meet this measure in their individual capacities: 33.6% of academics produce 1.25 or more accredited research units annually. The 112 Rhodes researchers who met or exceeded the 1.25 unit norm on average over the past three year period together produced 75.7% of all subsidy-earning research output, and included 11 research associates, professors emeritus, or post-doctoral fellows. 51% of this group of researchers is from the Science Faculty, and 31% from Humanities.

The top 47 researchers (or 13.2% of academics) produced 50% of fundable research outputs – 60% are from the Science Faculty, and 31% from Humanities. The top 20 researchers (or 5.6% of academics) produced 31.3% of fundable research outputs – they include 3 SARCHI Chairs, 2 Emeritus Professors, and 2 Research Associates.

Table 10 below displays the Faculty per capita outputs.

Table 10: Faculty per capita outputs, 2009

Faculty	2009 Permanent Academic Staff	Share of 2007-2009 Average Annual Research Output	Per Capita Accredited Research Output	% in Relation to DHET (1.25) Norm	Academic entities above DHET Norm
Science	90	54%	3.29	262.85%	12/14
Pharmacy	17	5%	1.48	118.00%	1/1
Education	32	8%	1.43	114.50%	1/3
Humanities	118	26%	1.20	95.75%	5/15
Law	16	2%	0.68	54.63%	0/1
Commerce	48	6%	0.67	53.91%	0/5

With specific reference to graduate supervision and outputs 63.3% of academics contributed to postgraduate supervision leading to a graduation of a thesis or part thesis based masters or doctoral student during this period, while 36.7% did not. 21.1% (or 68) of the full time academics and 6 research associates and professors produced 1 or more graduation output units per year. These 74 colleagues together produced 72.4% of all postgraduate subsidy for the period. 36 individual supervisors (or 10.1% of academics - including 4 research associates and professors emeritus) produced 50% of the graduation output subsidy. The top 20 supervisors (or 5.6% of academics - which included 3 research associates and professors emeritus) generated 35% of in terms of postgraduate output subsidy. Again there were variations by Faculty, with academics in Science and Education producing the most postgraduates.

This year we have 40 postdocs at Rhodes: 35 in the Science Faculty, 4 in the Humanities Faculty and 1 in the Commerce Faculty. This means a healthy 9:1 ratio of academics to postdocs. Of the 40 postdocs, 22 are male and 18 female; 16 black, 24 white; 22 international from 12 countries and 18 South African.

Like postgraduates, postdocs also contribute to the academic project in various ways: as role-models for postgraduates, inspiring them to consider careers in research; as potential catalysts of the production of new knowledge; through providing invaluable support to our leading scholars and researchers, and going on to become collaborators, and as potential academics and the next of scholars and researchers.

The total accredited publication output that was directly apportioned to the 41 post-doctoral fellows in 2009 was 16.5 accredited publication units. Of the post-doctoral fellows who published in accredited journals in 2009, 9 produced 1 or more units (the highest being 1.8), 14 produced some proportion of a unit, and 18 produces no output in 2009. Of those who did not produce any output, the reasons are varied. Some dropped out of the programme before producing any output (two in humanities and one in science), some did not get far enough in their research to publish in their first year of the fellowship, and some

were deployed in a general research support mode that de-emphasised their own publishing imperative.

Table 11 indicates that we have *relatively good* postgraduate graduation rates, overall and especially at the Honours level (less so at Masters and Doctoral levels).

Table 11: Postgraduate Success Rates at Select South African Universities, 2009

University	Qualifications (%)			
	Honours	Masters	Doctorate	Total PG
<b>Rhodes University</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>43</b>
University of Fort Hare	62	25	15	40
University of Cape Town	68	26	17	40
Central University of Technology	61	16	8	39
University of Stellenbosch	67	23	14	39
University of Johannesburg	47	18	13	36
University of the Western Cape	53	21	11	34
University of the Free State	41	23	13	33
Cape Peninsula University of Technology	48	14	9	31
Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	46	17	10	30
University of Zululand	42	11	0	29
North West University	30	25	16	28
University of Witwatersrand	58	17	12	28
Walter Sisulu University	39	5	0	27
University of Limpopo	51	12	12	27
University of Kwazulu-Natal	43	17	14	27
University of Pretoria	31	20	14	26
Tshwane University of Technology	48	21	15	23
Durban University of Technology	0	23	8	20
University of South Africa	20	8	9	18
Vaal University of Technology	40	7	9	12
Mangosuthu University of Technology	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>28</b>

Table 12 below illustrates our postgraduate success rates.

Table 12: Postgraduate Success Rates at Rhodes, 2006-2009

Year	2006		2007		2008		2009	
	Regist.	Grad. (Success)	Regist.	Grad. (Success)	Regist.	Grad. (Success)	Regist.	Grad. (Success)
<b>Honours</b>	564	453 (80)	632	516 (82)	589	518 (88)		(79)
Masters	609	171 (28)	642	176 (27)	656	182 (28)		(22)
Doctoral	245	46 (19)	238	48 (20)	245	27 (11)		(12)
Total	1418	670 (47)	1512	740 (49)	1490	727 (49)		(43)

In so far as the financial aid that we provide to postgraduate students is concerned, this is indicated by Table 13 below.

Table 13: Postgraduate Financial Aid: Number and percentage of Honours, Masters and Doctorate students receiving aid and average and total amounts, 2010-2011

Programme	2010			2011			
	Source	Government	Donors	Rhodes	Government	Donors	Rhodes
<b>Honours/PGDs:</b>							
Number/%	148 (19.7%)	98 (13.0%)	133 (17.7%)	132	86	125	
Total amount	R 4 502 717	R 3 231 076	R 1 515 010	R 3 770 302	R 3 102 424	R 1 635 755	
Average amount	R 30 424	R 32 970	R 11 391				
<b>Masters</b>							
Number/%	164 (21.5%)	138 (18.1%)	110 (14.4%)	124	96	117	
Total amount	R 6 071 022	R 4 681 495	R 1 958 097	R 5 313 583	R 3 435 802	R 2 100 956	
Average amount	R 37 018	R 33 924	R 17 801				
<b>Doctorate</b>							
Number/%	76	76 (23.5%)	36 (11.1%)	79	75	30	
Total amount	R 3 996 171	R 4 384 471	R 1 051 730	R 4 422 605	R 4 526 404	R 881 234	
Average amount	R 52 581	R 57 690	R 29 215				
<b>Total P/Grads</b>							
Number/%	388 (21.2%)	312 (17.0%)	279 (15.2%)	335	257	272	
Total amount	R 14 569 910	R 12 297 314	R 4 524 837	R 13 506 490	R 11 064 630	R 4 617 945	
Average amount	R 37 551	R 39 414	R 16 218				
<b>No. &amp; % of P/grads aided</b>	<b>979 (53.5%)</b>						
Honours	379 (50.4%)						
Masters	412 (53.9%)						
Doctorate	188 (58.0%)						
<b>Total R of Postgrad aid</b>	<b>R 31 391 789</b>						
Honours	R 9 248 803						
Masters	R 12 710 614						
Doctorate	R 9 432 372						
<b>Average R of Postgrad aid</b>	<b>R 32 065</b>						
Honours	R 24 403						
Masters	R 30 851						
Doctorate	R 50 172						

Table 14 indicates the financial aid provided to postdocs at Rhodes.

Table 14: Postdoc Financial Aid: Number and percentage of postdocs receiving aid and average and total amounts, 2010-2011

Programme	2010			2011			
	Source	Government	Donors	Rhodes	Government	Donors	Rhodes
<b>Postdocs</b>							
Number/%	19 (44%)	11 (25.5%)	13 (30.5%)	11 (27.5%)	11 (27.5%)	18 (45%)	
Total amount	R2 261 842	R1 247 981	R1 292 824	R1 379 000	R1 573 741	R2 067 832	
Average amount	R119 044	R113 452	R99 488	R125 363	R143 067	R114 879	
<b>Total Postdocs</b>	<b>43</b>			<b>40</b>			
<b>Total R of Postdoc support</b>	<b>R4 802 647</b>			<b>R5 020 573</b>			
<b>Average R of Postdoc support</b>	<b>R 111 689</b>			<b>R125 514</b>			

There are, clearly, many positive features with respect to postgraduate studies at Rhodes University and good foundations for further postgraduate expansion.

However, there are also constraints.

1. The number of academics without Masters and Doctorates, imposes limits on the number of academics that can supervise Masters and Doctoral students, and therefore on overall Masters and Doctoral student registrations.
2. There is insufficient academic space, and inadequate facilities and equipment to support larger numbers of postgraduate students.
3. The funds available to the University from external sources and also internally are inadequate for supporting talented postgraduate students, for competitively attracting students from other universities, and sometimes for also retaining outstanding students.
4. There is a need for new specially designed and dedicated postgraduate residences.

Importantly, there must also be an institutionally self-imposed constraint: any expansion of postgraduate students must not be at the expense of the quality of undergraduate studies and the undergraduate experience for which Rhodes is well-recognised. That is to say, concomitant with any expansion of postgraduate numbers and studies we must continue to maintain among the best undergraduate pass and success rates in South Africa. Nor should any expansion be at the expense of the *quality* of postgraduate supervision.

Similarly, while we must endeavour to improve the qualifications of our academics and create meaningful opportunities for this, we must also be sensible and realistic in the targets that we set and sensitive to the variations that generally exist by faculty and disciplines/fields.

Furthermore, while a number of academics at Rhodes may not be involved in Masters and Doctoral studies and supervision, they nonetheless play a very important role in undergraduate teaching and it is critical that we appreciate and acknowledge this.

While we must be honest and sober about our constraints, and whatever weaknesses and shortcomings we also identify, and while we must be clear-headed about our overall social and educational purposes, we must at the same time also recognise that there are possibilities that are afforded to us by our strengths and the changing national higher education environment.

After considerable prevarication as well as inadequate resources for postgraduate education (including for facilities, equipment and scholarships) the importance of postgraduate education and research and the need for greater funding appears to be more fully appreciated on the part of government. There are positive signals from the departments of Higher Education and Training and Science and Technology, as well as other state departments.

### **Goals and strategy**

Having mapped our enrolment and academic trajectory for coming years, it is important that we are proactive and also tap into the opportunities that will present themselves.

Declaring the intention to become more postgraduate does not, of course, mean it will be achieved. We need to think more deeply and carefully about what this entails and ensure

that there is both clarity of goals and concomitant strategies, plans and effective implementation.

Ultimately, the quest to become more postgraduate is located in the key social purposes of a university.

One is the *production of knowledge*, so that we can advance understanding of our natural and social worlds and enrich our accumulated scientific and cultural heritage. This includes “test(ing) the inherited knowledge of earlier generations”, dismantling the mumbo jumbo that masquerades for knowledge, reinvigorating knowledge and sharing discoveries, findings, innovations and new applications with others.

Through postgraduate study we seek to induct our students into research into the most arcane and abstract issues and the “most theoretical and intractable uncertainties of knowledge”; into striving to apply discoveries for the benefit of humankind, into learning to “operate on both the short and the long horizon” - grappling with urgent and ‘contemporary problems’ and seeking solutions to these, and foraging into issues and undertaking enquiries ‘that may not appear immediately relevant to others, but have the proven potential to yield great future benefit.’

Another key social purpose is the production of high quality graduates who can think imaginatively, ‘effectively and critically’; achieve a depth of knowledge in their disciplines and fields; critique ideas and views and construct alternatives, and communicate cogently, orally and in writing. Given our slogan, *Where Leaders Learn*, our graduates should also have ‘a broad knowledge of other cultures and other times’; appreciate how we ‘gain knowledge and understanding of the universe, of society, and of ourselves’, and think ‘systematically about moral and ethical problems.’

Many areas of our society and economy require graduates with higher levels of knowledge and professional expertise than the basic undergraduate degree. At the same time we have the challenge of ensuring that we also create (and transform the social composition) of the next generation of scholars and researchers.

From the angle of employment equity and the current social composition of our academic labour force, we have a serious and immediate ‘crisis’. The roots of this crisis are well known. From the angle of the age profile of our academic labour force, the remuneration of academics, the pull of the public (government, public enterprises and science councils) and private sectors that offer considerably better remuneration, the opportunity costs for first generation black graduates in terms of family expectations and deferred income, competition from other knowledge producing institutions, and the emigration of scholars the crisis is grave.

We can also pose whether we are nurturing the next generation of critical scholars – the historians, sociologists, philosophers, educators and other scientists that are passionately committed to both justice, and honest, critical and independent scholarship, and who must be the critical voices and public intellectuals of our society.

Our goal, in a nutshell, must be to *enhance the quantity, the quality and the equity profile of postgraduates* in coming years. We must seek to:

- *Maintain* the positive features of postgraduate study that we enjoy with our current postgraduate numbers
- *Effectively educate and supervise additional numbers* of postgraduates in future years
- Purposefully and creatively *further enhance* the quality of the postgraduate experience at Rhodes University.

The realization of these goals possibly requires us to give attention to a number of issues – *whether they do, how, in what ways and to what extents* – should emerge out of our conversations.

## Issues

The issues that are noted below are in no particular order of importance. Our conversation *must identify other issues, what might be the priorities among the host of issues, our willingness and preparedness to tackle them, when and how we tackle them, and what resources we are prepared to devote to them.*

### 1. Postgraduate enrolments

It should be recalled that the target enrolments for 2011, formulated on the basis of numbers predicted by Deans, was 834 Honours/PG Diploma, 844 Masters and 340 Doctoral students – a total of 2 018 postgraduates. The current 2011 enrolments are however, some way from the 2011 targets: PG Dip/Honours = 687, Masters = 743 and PhD = 327. The total postgraduate enrolment of 1757 is lower than that of 2010.

Clearly, we need to carefully scrutinise both our predictions and targets and make adjustments to our enrolment plan as necessary. We could also need to more effectively monitor postgraduate acceptances and registrations and also tighten the administrative processes relating to registrations.

### 2. The academic organisation of postgraduate studies and the responsibility for this at departmental and faculty levels and at the institutional level

Currently, postgraduate education and training is largely if not entirely a departmental issue. There is little collaboration and co-operation across departments and faculties around postgraduate education and training, even in areas and on issues that there could be invaluable and useful collaboration.

There is also little use made of the knowledge, expertise and experiences of those Rhodes academics that have considerable expertise related to specific aspects of postgraduate education and training, expertise that is being regularly called upon by national and international programmes of SANPAD.

There are also structured postgraduate initiatives at Rhodes such as the PhD weeks of the Education Faculty and the Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL) that could be usefully drawn on for a more systematic and coordinated approach to postgraduate education and training.

Already, we have agreed to creation of the post of Statistical Consultant at a professor level. It is intended that such a post should support postgraduates and academics with their statistical design and analysis needs. Such a Consultant could also develop and teach tailored courses at the beginner, intermediate and advanced levels.

Is there value to a more systematic and coordinated approach to postgraduate education and training (not a one size fits all approach or one that imagines there are not disciplinary and field differences) and to the introduction of sessions on the philosophy of science, the history of science, the sociology of knowledge, on knowledge, theory, methodology, literature review, writing proposals, scientific publishing and so forth?

If so, who should be responsible for such activities? Should we consider creating a Graduate School of the Humanities and Sciences for this purpose? Given our size, does it make sense to have separate Graduate Schools for the Humanities and the Sciences?

Currently there is no overall institutional level champion of postgraduate studies and students. Should there be an Academic Coordinator for Postgraduate Studies, who heads a Graduate School of the Humanities and Sciences the works with the Deans and Department-level Postgraduate coordinators to organize a Postgraduate Orientation programme, seminar series on cross-cutting issues, and appropriate common courses across disciplines and fields.

One issue that has come up from time to time is the preparation and approval of postgraduate proposals: Should candidates be permitted to work with supervisors on proposals without being formally registered? Should there be a 'candidacy' phase prior to the approval of a proposal? Should there be a maximum time period for the 'candidacy' phase for the preparation and approval of proposals?

Another issue that has been tabled on some occasions is the time to completion by especially Masters and Doctoral students. Do we need to establish upper limits on the time to completion for Masters and Doctoral students? Indeed, do we need to prune those laggards by setting firm limits to how much longer we will permit them to be registered with us?

Finally, the requirement to re-register all of our existing qualifications on the new Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) is an opportunity to critically scrutinize what we do and where necessary effect improvement. In so far as postgraduate programmes are concerned, we have to take a close look at research.

The HEQF requires research to be introduced at honours level. More specifically, the description of an honours qualification notes that: 'Bachelor Honours Degree programmes must include conducting and reporting research under supervision,

worth at least 30 credits, in a manner that is appropriate to the discipline or field of study (HEQF, 2007:25). Since the honours degree has 120 credits, for registration purposes this means that 25% of the degree programme must lead to *outcomes* focused on conducting and reporting research.

The key question for honours programmes is how the 30 credits leading to these outcomes can be constituted. Many honours programmes already include a research component/research training which may or may not constitute 30 credits worth of work. There could be a need for agreement within a Faculty regarding what might constitute a research component.

More generally, given our agreement to grow at postgraduate level there is arguably a need to conceptualise what research training means at different levels and what graduates' attributes should be in this regard. How do we build on the 30 credits Honours research training at the Masters (half and full thesis) and Doctoral levels? The differences in research traditions in the disciplines may mean that it is best to answer these questions within faculties.

The development of clear guidelines on what constitutes research training at different levels could have positive effects: the development of explicit and clearer criteria for the assessment of dissertations; the enhancement of supervision, especially where less experienced supervisors are involved, and the consolidation of certain training across the faculty or faculties.

### **3. The structure of postgraduate education**

The academic structure of postgraduate education is regulated by the Department of Higher Education and Training's (DHET) *The Higher Education Qualifications Framework* (October 2007). In addition, new postgraduate programmes must be accredited by the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education.

For example, the DHET sets out the 'purpose and characteristics' of a doctoral degree in the following way:

A Doctoral Degree requires a candidate to undertake research at the most advanced academic levels culminating in the submission, assessment and acceptance of a thesis. Course work may be required as preparation or value addition to the research, but does not contribute to the credit value of the qualification. The defining characteristic of this qualification is that the candidate is required to demonstrate high-level research capability and make a significant and original academic contribution at the frontiers of a discipline or field. The work must be of a quality to satisfy peer review and merit publication. The degree may be earned through pure discipline-based or multidisciplinary research or applied research. This degree requires a minimum of two years' full-time study, usually after completing Master's Degree. A graduate must be able to supervise and evaluate the research of others in

the area of specialisation concerned. (*The Higher Education Qualifications Framework*, October 2007).

There are a number of salient features of this conception of a doctoral degree.

- It entails advanced research that makes ‘a significant and original academic contribution’ to a discipline or field and demonstrates on the part of the student ‘high-level research capability’
- It involves the preparation of a thesis. The format of the thesis is, however, not prescribed. The traditional format is a monograph, though nothing excludes the format from being one where a number of articles are combined with a synthesis introduction and conclusion
- No credits are awarded for course work; i.e. course work does not diminish the requirements related to the production of a thesis
- The thesis must be peer-reviewed, usually including assessment by examiners that are external to the university at which the student is registered
- A ‘minimum of two years’ full-time study’ is required.

At South African universities, doctoral study is essentially based on relationships between individual supervisors and students oriented to the production of a thesis. Doctoral programmes that incorporate course work or a team of scholars and students working on particular research issues are rare. If they exist, they do so more in the natural sciences than in the humanities and social sciences. This is, however, slowly changing, with support provided by the National Research Foundation for Research Chairs for outstanding researchers and for Centre’s of Excellence the principal being a key catalyst.

In contrast with the doctorate based on a thesis that has the format of a monograph, in parts of Europe there is a shift towards a thesis that takes the format of a number of publishable articles. This has been motivated in terms of ‘this development forces the PhD students to pursue international publication at an earlier stage, while at the same time increases the spread of the research results to the scientific community.’ At least one South African university has adopted this format.

Is this a development that is desirable? Is it congruent with our conception of the knowledge, social and educational purposes of doctoral study and a doctoral degree – both in general and in the historical and social contexts of our society? Do we, indeed, have a clear and agreed conception of these purposes?

In the context of the South African higher education funding framework, an article-based thesis which translates into published peer-reviewed articles will benefit universities financially and it may be tempting to move in this direction. But this cannot be the sole or even principal reason for encouraging article-based theses. The merits of one or other thesis format and of both must surely and ultimately be explicated in relation to social and educational purposes.

Further, if one format is to replace the other, or they are to coexist, what choices are there to be in this regard for academics and doctoral students, and for different academic disciplines and fields?

Beyond the issue of the preferable format of the doctoral thesis, there may, however, be other issues related to the structure of doctoral education that deserve attention.

One is whether the traditional lone supervisor-student model is the most appropriate for doctoral education. What value and benefits might be derived from course work – whether formal and assessed or not - involving other scholars and doctoral students as part of doctoral education? The other is what might be the value and benefits of doctoral education being undertaken as part of an overall research programme that is mounted by an individual scholar/supervisor or a team of scholars and that involves a critical mass of doctoral or more generally postgraduate students and also post-doctoral researchers? The incorporation of doctoral students in a research programme tends to be an approach more common to the natural and health sciences than the humanities and social sciences – could there be benefits from piloting and instituting such an approach in the humanities and social sciences?

#### **4. The administration and visibility of postgraduate studies**

Currently, postgraduate academic registration and the administration of postgraduate examination processes are dealt with by the Registrar's Division in Eden Grove. The administration of postgraduate financial aid is handled through two small offices on the second floor of the Main Building. As postgraduate numbers grow the demands on both these areas will increase.

Is what is in place currently functioning optimally and adequate or are changes needed? What kinds of changes?

It seems there is some dissatisfaction among aspirant Honours students with regard to timeous decision-making and communication about their acceptance and registrations by academic departments. Some international students indicate that while they have to pay their MIP's by Mid-January, they are sometimes only notified after this date whether they will be permitted to register.

Do we need to have a greater visibility at Rhodes with regard to postgraduate studies if it will comprise 30% plus students in coming years? Is there a need for a building - a Graduate Centre - that serves as the face and hub (administrative, in part possibly academic) of postgraduate studies at Rhodes?

#### **5. The recruitment and attraction of postgraduates to Rhodes**

On the one hand we have to persuade our eligible undergraduates to consider undertaking postgraduate studies at Rhodes, and our postgraduates to continue further studies at Rhodes. On the other hand, we have to also strive to recruit eligible students from other universities.

At the Masters and Doctoral levels, students ought to be attracted by outstanding programmes and scholars. We cannot be content only with retaining our own students for postgraduate studies; we should test our standing by the number of outside students who want to pursue their postgrad studies with us.

We need to request our Communication and Marketing Division to apply their minds to how they can assist the University in general and academic departments and other entities in particular to effectively communicate our postgraduate programmes and the achievement of our scholars.

## **6. New postgraduate academic programmes**

Seeking to become more postgraduate also requires of us to give attention to new postgraduate programme offerings.

Four new Masters programmes - in Creative Writing, Social Policy, Bioinformatics and Applied Computer Science – were initiated this year, as well as a new Honours specialisation in Health Journalism in partnership with Discovery Health. There has also been the continued expansion of the new Doctoral programme in Higher Education Studies that was initiated by CHERTL last year. (There are currently 31 doctoral students registered, a vindication of the decision of the University to award CHERTL a full time academic post of Doctoral Programme Coordinator.

This year and in coming years, we will need to give attention to identifying and potentially introducing new postgraduate and research niche areas and programmes.

To date, we have won five prestigious South African Research Chairs - in Medicinal Chemistry, Marine Science and Astronomy and two in Mathematics Education. The University must continue to energetically pursue further chairs in proven areas of academic excellence.

This year sees the introduction of four new postgraduate and research focus areas funded by the Mellon Foundation (\$ 800 000): in *Southern African Literature*, *Critical Sexual and Reproductive Health Studies*, *Visual and Performing Arts of Africa* and in Media and Democracy.

We have also agreed to create a new postgraduate and research focus area in either the Commerce or Law faculties.

Other new postgraduate and research programmes to consolidate our excellence in water, isiXhosa and multilingualism, medicinal chemistry, fisheries science and other areas are intended to follow.

On the basis of our breadth and depth in water education and research, we hope to bid for the status of UNESCO Institute for Water Education and Research and become the key institutional hub on the African continent in this field. This is a R120 million initiative.

## **7. Supervisory capacity and capabilities and their enhancement**

As indicated earlier, 52% of academics have PhDs and some 30% have Masters degrees. We have also seen that there is considerable unevenness in the production of research and postgraduate supervision across and within faculties and academics.

Given this, how many students can we effectively sustain in postgraduate studies, especially at Masters and Doctoral levels? Have our targets in our 2011-2013 enrolment plan, in general and by faculty, been established with the necessary consideration?

Do we, can we, assume that all academics with the requisite qualifications are in a position to provide high quality supervision? Do we, can we, assume that all academics with the requisite qualifications are interested in postgraduate education and training?

Do we need to develop a programme to mentor and induct new academics into the role of being a supervisor? The \$ 400 000 Senior Scholar programme being funded by the Mellon Foundation could lend itself to this.

Should a module on supervision be developed as part of the PGDHE in Higher Education, and should new academics be required for tenure purposes to complete a module in supervision, and current academics be encouraged to do so?

We appear to have the practice that a supervisor must have a qualification at the level of the student or above that of the student that s/he is supervising. Should this become formal policy?

Our practice is also that an academic must be employed by Rhodes or have an academic status at Rhodes to be the supervisor of a Rhodes student (it seems that we are happy to accommodate co-supervisors from elsewhere). Are we agreeable to now make this formal policy?

We have a category of senior scholars on research contracts who are not all based at Rhodes permanently. Part of their responsibility is to supervise postgraduates. We have agreed that: in instances where the senior scholar is not based at Rhodes, a co-supervisor should be appointed who is a Rhodes staff member; or that an academic must be designated to liaise with a student; and that the supervisor should be present for meetings of the Higher Degrees committees at which proposals are being tabled and discussed. Are we agreeable to now make this formal policy and also specify more clearly and explicitly the role of the academic liaison person?

## **8. Norms related to students per supervisor at different levels of postgraduate studies**

There is a limit to what our most productive researchers can do. There is a real danger of burn-out on their part if we do not manage this properly. Whose responsibility is it to manage this? Should departments be requested to give careful attention to the number

of postgrads each academic staff member supervises, given their other responsibilities in the departments?

### **9. A compact between the University and students regarding support and supervision**

What can postgraduates at the different levels reasonably expect from the University and specifically academics and supervisors with respect to education and supervision?

With respect to the relationship between the University, academics, supervisors and postgraduate students, do we need to formalize and set out in writing our mutual responsibilities to each other? That is to say, should we openly, transparently and clearly explicate what students can expect from the University and supervisors and what we, in turn, expect from students, how we propose to deal with differences and conflicts and so forth?

### **10. Norms related to the provision of facilities (and their location), equipment and library materials to students**

What can postgraduates at the different levels reasonably expect from the University in so far as facilities, equipment and the like are concerned?

As part of a compact with postgraduates should we commit ourselves to providing postgraduates with office space and furniture? How do we accommodate them so that in a real sense they become part of research communities?

Where should they be located - in the department or Faculty or in a centralized postgraduate hub? Of course needs may vary according to disciplines and fields and so there need not be a one size approach.

On the understanding that a vibrant and well-equipped library is indispensable for the pursuit of knowledge, we have spent R75 million on a spectacular new Library with state of the art and technology facilities.

Included here is a Research Commons dedicated exclusively to masters and doctoral students and academics. Here scholars have at their fingertips extensive digital research databases for both an engagement with current knowledge and for the creation of new knowledge.

How many books should different levels of postgraduates be permitted to borrow from the Library and for how long? What about inter-Library Loan books?

Apart from the Research Common in the Library, there is the possibility of Ground Zero of the Library becoming a Postgraduate Learning Café.

Finally, should we guarantee every Doctoral student or perhaps even every Masters student a 'notebook', or to be provocative (given that our IT Division currently does not

accommodate Apple users), an I-Pad to facilitate their research and writing? Should we also make this possible for supervisors?

### **11. Scholarships, bursaries, loans and other financial support for postgraduate students**

With increasing postgraduate numbers the need for postgraduate financial aid will grow.

What external and internal sources and mechanisms currently exist to provide bursaries, scholarships, and loans to talented students in need? Are there funds for research, conference attendance and the like?

Is our communication regarding the availability of scholarships, bursaries and loans, and our means of communication, effective?

How do we plan to support larger numbers of postgraduates in need of financial aid? Are our current ways of providing financial assistance apposite?

Is it time to do some thinking about this and to also decide on what should be ideally the quantum of a full scholarship at Rhodes for Honours, Masters and Doctoral students?

### **12. Other support for postgraduate students**

Are our support structures related to international exchanges, career opportunities and advice, mentoring, counseling, and social and cultural activities and the like appropriately geared for the specific needs of postgraduates?

### **13. Postgraduate residence accommodation**

The expansion of postgraduate numbers has obvious implications for student accommodation in iRhini/Grahamstown.

Should we leave the accommodating of postgraduates to the private student housing sector in the town?

Or should we be conceptualizing, designing and planning, in consultation with postgraduates, new dedicated postgraduate residences?

### **14. Postgraduate representation and participation in University governance**

Are the structures and processes for the representation of postgraduate concerns and interests adequate?

Is there meaningful and adequate participation of postgraduates in the governance of the University?

Should postgraduate participation be subsumed, as it is currently, under the SRC or should postgraduates participate separately and independently in University governance structures?

As we begin to discuss all the above and other issues, it is vitally important that there be effective channels for hearing the views of postgraduates.

### **Staff**

The pursuit of a greater postgraduate and research trajectory will necessarily have implications for staffing.

Already, librarians are being trained locally and in the United States as dedicated research librarians through the support of the Carnegie Corporation.

As noted, we have agreed to create the post of Statistical Consultant to support postgraduate students and academic staff around statistical design and analysis and to also mount courses for postgraduate students and staff.

We may need to reconsider how we calculate the optimal staff allocations for departments in the light of larger postgraduate numbers.

The more systematic and formal preparation of postgraduates could require investing in a Postgraduate Academic Coordinator at the professor level.

### **Infrastructure**

During 2011, there will be an opportunity to apply for new Infrastructure and Efficiency Funding for 2012-2014, and there will be further opportunities in future years.

In accordance with the criteria that will be communicated to us, we will need to settle in due course what our application will encompass. Infrastructure for postgraduate studies and residences could be two of the categories – should we apply for a postgraduate centre and new postgraduate residences?

Of course, any new infrastructure development will be guided by the long-term Campus Development Plan, so that we remain a beautiful campus and also incorporate environmental considerations in our planning.

### **Finances**

An agenda to further develop postgraduate studies at Rhodes will naturally require financial resources.

Funding could come from the University's own internal funds through the annual budget process; from earmarked and competitive funds provided by different state departments (principally, though not exclusively, the departments of Science and Technology and Higher

Education and Training), state agencies (National Research Foundation and science councils), and philanthropic foundations (Mellon, Ford, Carnegie, Kresge, etc.), corporate donors and alumni.

Recognising that Rhodes operates in an increasingly competitive environment, especially *vis a vis* other South African universities that are loosely termed 'research' universities, the University's Board of Governors, with the support of the University Council, has endorsed the creation of the Sandisa Imbewu ('We are growing/multiplying our seeds') Fund to fund strategic new academic initiatives. R 12 million has been pledged over the next 5 years.

The Sandisa Imbewu Fund will provide the University the seed funding to effectively pursue new strategic initiatives of an academic nature. The initiatives that will be supported will facilitate: the consolidation and enhancement of current areas of academic excellence at Rhodes; ventures into new academic and research areas at the postgraduate level, and the timely exploitation of new opportunities that can enhance research and knowledge production and the quality of graduates produced

As far as possible, initiatives should enhance postgraduate and/or research outputs and bring in additional subsidy funding, leverage other sources of funding for postgraduate and research programmes, and become sustainable after initial seed funding.

## Conclusion

Our overall goal must be to *enhance the quantity, the quality and the equity profile of our postgraduates, and especially South African postgraduates.*

We need to pursue the quantitative growth, the qualitative enhancement and the transformation of the social composition of our postgraduates *simultaneously* (not consecutively).

In support of this goal, there are a number of new policies, interventions, practices, structures and mechanisms that we could need to create and implement.

Our conversation on postgraduate development and the choices and decisions that hopefully flow from this has the potential to set us on exciting and dynamic new paths of development.

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