COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION
HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COMMITEE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUDIT REPORT
ON RHODES UNIVERSITY

Report of the HEQC to Rhodes University

December 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPENDIX B: THE AUDIT PANEL

APPENDIX C: LIST OF DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED BY RHODES UNIVERSITY
 (i) Appendices attached to the portfolio
 (ii) Appendices available on CD
 (iii) Appendices available on site

APPENDIX D: THE AUDIT VISIT SCHEDULE

7.   ACRONYMS

AARP	Alternative Admissions Research Project
ACE	Advanced Certificate of Education
ADC	Academic Development Centre
AP	Audit Portfolio
AP&SC	Academic Planning and Staffing Committee
AP&QA	Academic Planning and Quality Assurance
BC	Business and Commerce
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CASRA	Centre for Applied Social Research and Action
CESM	Classification of Educational Subject Material
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CREST	Centre for Research on Science and Technology
CSD	Centre for Social Development
DoE	Department of Education
ESU	Extended Studies Unit
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEMIS	Higher Education Management System
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
HSS	Humanities and Social Sciences
IQR	Internationalisation Quality Review
IP	Intellectual Property
ISI	Institute for Scientific Information of the USA
IT	Information Technology
ITSC	Information Technology Steering Committee
JRC	Joint Research Committee
MBA	Masters in Business Administration
MiST	Mathematics, Information and Science Technology education programme
NEPAD	New Partnerships for Africa's Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NQF	National Qualifications Authority
PGDHE	Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education
PGLC	Postgraduate Liaison Committee
PRT	Peer Review Team
QA	Quality Assurance
QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
RIBS	Rhodes Investec Business School
RU	Rhodes University

RUEL	Rhodes University East London
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SANReN	Southern African National Research Network
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SAPSE	South African Post-Secondary Education (management information system)
SET	Science, Engineering and Technology
SRC	Students' Representative Council
T&LC	Teaching and Learning Committee
VC	Vice-Chancellor

OVERVIEW OF THE AUDIT

INTRODUCTION

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) has statutory responsibility to conduct institutional audits as indicated in the Higher Education Act of 1997. This responsibility of the HEQC is also recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in the accreditation of the CHE as the Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) for the higher education band.

The audit of Rhodes University, (hereinafter referred to as Rhodes) was conducted by the HEQC in terms of its mandate. This document reports on the audit process and findings based on the Audit Portfolio and documentary appendices provided by Rhodes, supplementary documentation requested from the institution, and interviews, and observations made during the audit visit that took place between 5 and 9 September 2005.

This report[1], contains an overview of the audit visit, the findings of the Panel in relation to the audit criteria set by the HEQC and a list of commendations and recommendations made by the HEQC.

THE AUDIT PROCESS

In July 2004 the Executive Director of the HEQC secured the consent of the Vice-Chancellor and the senior academic management team at Rhodes that the University would participate in an institutional audit between 5 and 9 September 2005.

Rhodes conducted its institutional self-evaluation in the agreed time and produced an Audit Portfolio for review by the Audit Panel. Together with its use of the 19 HEQC audit criteria, Rhodes chose, in consultation with the HEQC, to have an additional special focus on the student experience at the institution as a distinctive feature of the University. The Rhodes *Audit Portfolio* (hereinafter AP) was deliberately structured to reflect this focus. Rhodes' self-evaluation portfolio was developed in parallel with its 2005 internal academic review process and was managed by the Audit Portfolio Committee, a sub-committee of Rhodes' Quality Assurance Committee. Different constituencies at the institution were drawn into the self-evaluation process through providing information that contributed to the self-evaluation and the content of the Audit Portfolio. The resulting *Rhodes Audit Portfolio 2005* together with its printed annexures: *Digest of Statistics 2004, Academic Review Report 2005*, *Undergraduate Prospectus 2006*, *University*

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[1] The report includes four appendices: Appendix A lists the objectives of HEQC audits; Appendix B provides the names of the members of the Audit Panel, Appendix C lists the documents submitted by Rhodes, and Appendix D contains the audit visit schedule.

Calendar 2005 and *Vice-Chancellor's Report 2004* and a host of appendices available on CD, was submitted to the HEQC in July 2005.

The HEQC constituted an Audit Panel consisting of senior academics and academic administrators from the higher education community, most of whom had taken part in auditor preparation workshops run by the HEQC. An Audit Portfolio meeting was convened in Pretoria on 11 August 2005 at which the Audit Panel considered the Audit Portfolio in preparation for the audit visit. During this meeting, the Audit Panel identified additional documents to be requested from Rhodes prior to the audit visit.

A senior member of the HEQC staff undertook a preparatory visit to Rhodes in August 2005. During that visit, the format and programme for the visit and other details of the audit were discussed and generally agreed to by the senior management of Rhodes.

The audit visit took place from 4 to 9 September 2005. The Audit Panel undertook a tour of the campus on 4 September and conducted interviews with senior management and committee members on 5 and 6 September. On 7 and 8 September, the Audit Panel split into three groups and interviewed a wide range of Rhodes' staff members and students. Interviews were completed on 9 September, and verbal feedback was given to the Vice-Chancellor and the executive team.

Open sessions were also available for any staff or student member of the institution and community to meet the Audit Panel and make a submission. Some staff members and union representatives made use of the opportunity to address the Panel.

In all, the Audit Panel interviewed more than four hundred people in 52 interview sessions during the audit visit, including
- Council members;
- The Vice-Chancellor and members of his executive team;
- Academic and academic support staff;
- Administrative staff;
- Full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students;
- Civic and community representatives;
- Alumni.

This report reflects the audit process and findings based on the Audit Portfolio provided by Rhodes, supplementary documentation requested from the institution, and interviews, and observations made during the audit visit. Every effort has been made to understand the quality arrangements at the institution at the time of the audit visit and to base the

Panel's conclusions on the documentation submitted, the interviews held and the observations made.

It is expected that Rhodes will use these findings to strengthen its internal quality management systems and thereby facilitate the improvement of the quality of its core academic activities. Decisions about the manner in which this is done, and the priority accorded to the various recommendations, is the prerogative of Rhodes. It is expected that five months after the publication of the Audit Report, Rhodes will submit to the HEQC an improvement plan based on the HEQC Audit Report.

The HEQC would like to thank Rhodes for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the audit process. The HEQC also wishes to express appreciation for the openness and confidence shown by the Rhodes management in allowing the Audit Panel to conduct 52 interview sessions during the five-day visit and to have access to key documents. Efficient preparation by Rhodes resulted in a trouble-free audit and this allowed the auditors to focus their attention on the main purposes of the audit. The hospitality and assistance of Rhodes' personnel was appreciated. Ms Sandy Stephenson and her team are thanked in particular for the preparation of the documentation, as well as for their co-operation and helpfulness throughout the process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW OF RHODES UNIVERSITY

1.   Rhodes is the smallest university in South Africa. It was inaugurated in 1951. However, the history of the university started much earlier in the century, with the establishment of Rhodes University College in 1904. The university takes this as the official date of its creation, and as a result, celebrated its centenary in 2004. Rhodes is, in the South African context, a small sized, "rural", predominantly contact and residential (47 student residences) English medium university. The "rural" character of Rhodes derives from its location in the Eastern Cape town of Grahamstown, which is considerably isolated from the main provincial economic centres. Until the recent restructuring of the higher education landscape, Rhodes also had an urban dimension, with a campus in East London. This campus was opened in the early 1980s and its student profile included a much larger number of black students than that of the main campus. The restructuring of the higher education landscape announced by the Minister of Education in 2001 identified Rhodes' East London campus (RUEL) for incorporation into the University of Fort Hare. Rhodes accepted the proposal, and set the date for the transfer to take place at the latest on 1 January 2004.

2.   At present, the majority of Rhodes' students are concentrated in undergraduate degrees, with only about 20 percent enrolled in postgraduate studies. The majority of enrolments (both undergraduate and postgraduate) are in the humanities and social sciences (including education), followed by science, engineering and technology (SET), and commerce. The HEQC audit was of Rhodes University as configured after the transfer of RUEL to Fort Hare. According to 2003 HEMIS data, Rhodes as a single campus institution had a total headcount enrolment of 5,597 students, of which 80.50 percent were undergraduates and 19.49 percent were postgraduates. Rhodes is organised into six faculties: Commerce, Education, Humanities, Law, Pharmacy and Science.

MISSION AND FITNESS OF PURPOSE

3.   Rhodes sees itself as an institution which has both an international and a local (African) identity, and as an institution committed to democracy, academic freedom, rigorous scholarship, sound moral values and social responsibility (AP, Appendix 54, Vision). Rhodes' mission has four main components: (i) a

conception of excellence associated with international recognition, (ii) a description of the overall attributes of its graduates, which includes academic and personal competencies and attitudes, (iii) a conception of scholarship linked to research in which excellence is associated with its international character, and (iv) an indication of the institution's capacity and desire to contribute to local (Eastern Cape) and regional (Southern Africa) development. While the institution's understanding of excellence is not explained in the rest of the mission, the other three elements are addressed in the 11 undertakings to which the University has indicated its commitment. The fact that the institution acknowledges that in realizing its mission it has to take into account the legacy of the apartheid past, implies that Rhodes' understanding and operationalisation of quality in the three core functions cannot be separated from issues of transformation understood both as redress and equity and responsiveness to broader national imperatives. This is the point of departure that the Panel has taken to analyse Rhodes' audit portfolio.

4.   The *Audit Portfolio* adds two additional features to Rhodes' identity as expressed in its mission: its affiliation to the liberal arts tradition, and its international character (AP: 7 and 10). The liberal arts tradition, of which Rhodes sees itself a part, has its roots in the 19th century and, to a large extent, is inspired by John Newman's writings on the concept of "a university". The Panel noted that, despite its ostensible centrality to Rhodes' identity, the implications of the liberal arts tradition for Rhodes have not been considered in any strategic document or any other documentary appendix received or requested by the Panel. Consequently, there is little evidence of the kind of thought that may have been given to Rhodes' interpretation of the liberal arts tradition and thereby of the model which the institution might be pursuing or adapting. The Panel noted with interest that almost no senior management member seemed to have engaged with the notion of a "liberal arts college" or thought it important as a reference point that could inform thinking about the three core functions at the institution. The Panel is of the view that if, as claimed in the *Audit Portfolio*, "Rhodes has the reputation of being a well-established liberal arts institution" the University needs to make sure that staff and students understand the features that make Rhodes into not only a liberal arts institution but a well-established one. Similarly, drawing on the conceptual and historical distinctiveness of the notions of "liberal arts" and "liberal arts colleges" would require the institution to conduct a university-wide debate involving management, academic staff and students.

Recommendation 1

The HEQC recommends that, if Rhodes retains the notion of being a liberal arts university, the University consider the possibility of initiating institution-

wide debate about the liberal arts tradition in order to contextualise its value and currency in South Africa and address its compatibility with the University's claimed African identity. Such a debate may provide critical reference points for the discharge of the three core functions and for conceptions of quality in those core functions.

5. Rhodes' understanding of excellence is strongly associated with international recognition. According to its vision, Rhodes strives to be an internationally respected institution. This is translated into the mission of producing "internationally accredited graduates". Similarly, the idea of excellence in research and in teaching suggests that "excellence" and "internationalisation" are complementary concepts for Rhodes' management, academic staff and students. The fact that the institution decided to undergo an Internationalisation Review in 2001, coordinated by the "International Management of Higher Education programme of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development", indicates the importance attached to this issue by Rhodes' management and staff. One of the most important points made in the report of the Peer Review Team (PRT) was that, in most areas, Rhodes' approach to internationalisation was reactive and *ad hoc*. In order to move from an emphasis on profile to an integration of internationalisation in the academic core functions, the PRT indicated that it was necessary to develop a conceptual framework (AP, Appendix 44: 25). In terms of the governance arrangements for this function, the PRT examined several organisational structures and recommended, as the best case scenario, the creation of an International Office. Following the recommendation of the Internationalisation Quality Review (IQR) Report, the institution appointed a part-time Dean: International Office in February 2004. An Internationalisation Policy was approved by the Senate in March 2005, four years after the review had taken place (AP: 78). The Audit Panel analysed the newly approved policy and found that Rhodes now defines internationalisation in line with the IQR as "the process whereby an international dimension is integrated into the teaching and learning, research and service functions of the University" (AP: 78). However, a number of gaps were identified by the Audit Panel. Firstly, the policy does not have a strategic view of where the institution wants to go with its drive for internationalisation or how this will take conceptual and operational shape in the core functions, as suggested in the IQR Report's recommendations (AP, Appendix 24). Secondly, the policy does not provide a conceptualisation of internationalisation in relation to curriculum development, research or community engagement.

Recommendation 2

The HEQC recommends that Rhodes give continuing attention to the development of a fuller conceptual framework for internationalisation, foster wide debate at the University on how internationalisation could be given expression in the different core functions, and how it could be made compatible with local and regional objectives and the African identity signalled in the institution's mission and vision.

Equity and transformation

6.   Rhodes is well aware of the complex issues that confront the institution in terms of the transformation of the student equity profile. A case in point is the recognition of the need to revise its definition of "disadvantage", taking into consideration class as well as race issues for its recruitment and admissions policy (AP: 94). The institution has taken some steps to deal with the issue of student equity as can be observed in the Quality Development Plan. In this regard, senior management has indicated the institution's willingness to support its commitment financially as far as possible. Yet, progress in improving student equity has been admittedly slow. While the University explains this as a constraint of its geographical location and of the poor matriculations record in the Eastern Cape, it seemed to the Panel that the lack of a comprehensive student equity strategy may also be undermining the institution's efforts in this matter.

Recommendation 3

The HEQC recommends that, in order to accelerate improvement in its redress and equity profile, Rhodes develop a recruitment strategy that indicates firstly, institutional enrolment targets for African, Coloured and Indian students; secondly, the resources and mechanisms that will be put in place in order to achieve these targets, and thirdly, the support mechanisms which the University will institute in order to facilitate the academic success of students.

7.   In relation to staff and particularly academic staff, the *Audit Portfolio* indicates that Rhodes has formalised a number of policies for the selection of academic and support staff since 1999, and that the institution has developed a protocol on employment equity in 2001 (AP: 46). Yet, Rhodes continues to face a challenge in relation to the recruitment of black academic staff. As in most South African universities, the problem of the race and gender profile of Rhodes' instruction and research staff is compounded by the age of the personnel. Rhodes will soon need to replace the bulk of its professoriate, given that at the associate professor layer, more than 40 percent of the staff is already over 50 years old. If the lack of black in-house candidates for these positions is taken into account, Rhodes will be

facing a serious problem not only of equity but also of simply replacing its current academic workforce. Both issues are problems shared by most historically white South African universities which have not been directly affected by the mergers. The Panel is concerned that, despite the existence of an *Equity Policy* (AP, Appendix 22) that sets out the principles that should inform implementation, this has not been translated into a concerted recruitment plan for academic staff, apart from statements about affirmative action in the *Equity Policy* (Appendix 22: 10).

Recommendation 4

The HEQC recommends that the University give urgent attention to the consolidation of the institution's emerging policies on staff equity. This would entail the development of an integrated equity plan that should include a comprehensive strategy focused on recruitment as well as on development programmes and support structures to achieve better and faster results in changing Rhodes' staff equity profile.

8.   Rhodes' awareness of the role that some aspects of its institutional culture could be playing in the slow pace of the overall transformation of the institution (AP: Appendix 18: 27 and 43: 16) led the University in 1999 to set up a number of investigations into these matters. What emerged from an analysis of the outcomes of that investigation is that cultural exclusivity and racism are complex issues which involve individuals as much as institutions and that dealing with them is not simply a matter of policy development, although normative frameworks are necessary. Attitudinal changes are also needed. The institution is fully aware of this. Interviews held with staff and students suggest that Rhodes urgently needs to confront the issues which have surfaced through its own investigations into institutional culture, and to understand some of these issues better in order to develop appropriate interventions. This is an area that the institution has included in its Quality Development Plan (AP: 94). Although the inclusion of institutional culture in the Quality Development Plan is an indication of the institution's concern about this issue, interviews with senior management did not persuade the Panel that this constitutes a matter of urgency for the majority of the institution's leadership.

Recommendation 5

The HEQC recommends that the University consider the development of a bold and transparent strategy to address negative aspects of its institutional culture. This needs to include an institution-wide implementation plan to transform relevant aspects of Rhodes' institutional culture and clear monitoring mechanisms to track progress.

9.   Responsiveness in the sense of identifying and acting on specific educational and knowledge needs in the society and the economy is an important component of the notion of transformation in higher education. Rhodes has developed a series of academic courses designed to respond to specific needs of the Eastern Cape Province. One instance is the Doctorate in Pharmacy programme. In many cases, the development of such qualifications shows the institution's ability to take advantage of market opportunities. The Panel would like to congratulate the institution on its commitment, inventiveness and deployment of its capabilities to respond to the needs of the provincial and national economy for specific skills in a range of disciplines.

Commendation 1

The Panel commends the institution for the development of programmes and qualifications which respond to specific regional needs, and encourages it to explore further additional areas of responsiveness where it could maximise the synergies between the three core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement within a disciplinary as well as a multidisciplinary framework.

Institutional Planning, Resource Allocation and Quality Management

10.   At the strategic and planning level, Rhodes is organised in a relatively flat management structure governed by the values of collegiality and trust. According to Rhodes the most salient features of its planning model are:

- A bottom up structure, which allows for the involvement of staff and students

- An ability to respond to departmental and disciplinary needs and changes

- Collegiality

- Accountability based on trust

- Utilisation of statistical information (*Digest of Statistics*) to support the planning process.

11.   The Panel noted that the University has been able, partially because of the small size of its operations, to keep its most strategic decision-making structure, the Academic Planning and Staffing Committee (AP&SC), as a Senate and Council committee and not, as in many other institutions, as part of executive management. The AP&SC is an academic body where the Vice-Chancellor,

elected deans, the registrar and the finance director, together with the structures responsible for quality assurance, quality development and monitoring, and students and union representatives, make decisions about the intellectual size and shape of the institution.

12. To a large extent, planning at Rhodes is centred on the results of the regular academic reviews which are implemented by the HoDs in close communication with the deans. According to the *Audit Portfolio* the academic reviews have become the most important process of strategic decision-making at the institution. Not only are these reviews an opportunity to analyse and assess the achievement of the institution's mission, academic shape and direction but they also are opportunities to look into the allocation of financial, human and physical resources to the faculties (AP: 13).
Commendation 2
The HEQC commends Rhodes on the utilisation of the academic reviews as instruments for planning, resource allocation and quality assurance, which afford the institution an opportunity for self-reflection and integration of department specific information into institution level analysis

13. The Panel noted the distinctive aspects of Rhodes' arrangement for strategic decision-making and planning, and understands the importance that the University attaches to its ability to operate within a framework of collegiality and personal trust. However, the Panel is of the view that this model alone may not be supportive enough of the alignment of Rhodes' own institutional mission with the national imperatives articulated in the White Paper and in the National Plan for Higher Education, particularly in terms of responsiveness and transformation.

14. Rhodes' conception of quality has two main dimensions. Firstly, it focuses on fitness for purpose and aligns quality assurance with planning. Secondly, it focuses predominantly on quality assurance, giving much less attention to the support, development and monitoring of quality. The alignment between quality and planning was translated at the institutional level into the Office of Quality Assurance and Planning in 2001. As indicated in the *Audit Portfolio*, Rhodes' small management team facilitates the combination of these functions. The implementation of this aspect of the conception of quality assurance hinges on the conduct of institution-wide reviews, both academic and administrative.

15.   The conceptualisation of quality primarily as quality assurance, without systematically including support, development and monitoring of quality, has important implications for the governance of quality at the institution and for the ways in which units, such as the Academic Development Centre (ADC), are involved in quality related activities. From the point of view of the governance of quality, Rhodes' management of quality is both centralised and decentralised, reflecting the institution's conception of QA as a shared commitment and responsibility. Consistent with this, the University encourages participants in self-reviews to set their own academic and equity objectives within the broader mission of the University/Department (AP: 17).

16.   The Panel concurs with the institution that individuals and academic units need to interpret the institutional mission and set their own targets in relation to it. Yet in order for Rhodes to be able to monitor its own progress in the achievement of institution level goals, it is also necessary to develop a number of performance indicators or targets that operate at institutional level. The use of some common performance indicators allows for the identification of problems or areas of weakness and the implementation of appropriate mechanisms for the support, development and monitoring of quality defined both as fitness for purpose and fitness of purpose. The Panel is of the view that, in the area of transformation, especially in relation to student and staff demographic profiles and institutional culture, the lack of high level steering by management with regard to institutional goals may have the effect of constraining the achievement of Rhodes' own stated goals.

Recommendation 6

The HEQC recommends that Rhodes engage with the issue of how, within a decentralised system of quality management, faculties and academic departments could actively engage with and give expression to the achievement of institutional level objectives, which pertain to the conception of quality both as fitness for and fitness of purpose.

17.   In relation to the conceptualisation of quality management as including not only quality assurance but also quality development, the Panel noted that the improvement of teaching and research supervision, for example, are left to the initiative of individual academics, who on their own accord take part in the activities initiated by the ADC or the Research Office. The Panel is of the view that Rhodes's voluntaristic approach to the development and improvement of

quality has a number of serious implications for consistency of achievement in the area of teaching and learning. The Panel would like to draw to the attention of the institution that the achievement of some of its strategic level objectives, particularly in relation to redress, may be predicated on the development of more complex and multi-faceted understanding of quality in the three core functions.

Recommendation 7

The HEQC recommends that Rhodes consider, within its framework of collegial governance, a re-conceptualisation of quality management to give greater weight to quality support, development and monitoring as strategic tools for the achievement of institutional level objectives.

Benchmarking

18.   Rhodes does not have a set of performance indicators that provide a quantitative or qualitative measure of the institution's achievement of its high level goals. On the whole, the institution appears to be unconvinced about the usefulness of benchmarking or of user surveys. Yet the University is not opposed to inter-institutional comparisons or to the establishment of national benchmarks based on research (AP: 89). As a matter of fact, the institution has undertaken a number of surveys in response to perceived problems.

19.   The Panel is of the view that the compilation of the *Digest of Statistics* is an excellent way of sharing information about the institution across academic and support units. However, for this publication to be a more useful element in planning and quality assurance, the institution needs to make some adjustments to its conception. The Panel would like to encourage the institution, through the relevant governance structures (possibly the AP&SC), to identify the strategic areas in the three core functions for which, in terms of the University mission and vision, it would be important to develop indicators. The University is encouraged to reflect on what those indicators ought to be, how information pertaining to them should be collected, what the role of academic departments should be in this task, and who in the institution should be responsible for interpreting, integrating and monitoring those indicators.

Recommendation 8

The HEQC recommends that Rhodes consider the identification and use of a set of performance indicators which could reinforce the institution's planning and quality management functions, and explore the utilisation of

suitable benchmarking tools in a formalised and regular manner to support decision-making for academic planning and quality improvement.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

20.   The University prides itself on being able to connect the intellectual and social lives of the students during their stay on campus in a purposeful and programmatic manner. This conceptualisation of teaching and learning is based on the notion that students are active participants in a process which "aims to add value to their personal educational experience" (AP: 32).

21.   The Panel noted that the curricular aspect of the student experience at Rhodes is the result of a conceptualisation of teaching and learning that sees teaching as an intellectual discipline that needs to be learned and not as a "common sense" activity. This is supported by Rhodes' undertakings to create a research-based teaching and learning environment, and to promote excellence and innovation in teaching and learning. This conceptualisation has a number of practical implications for staff training and promotion as well as for the structures and resources which have to be put in place to support both research-based teaching and excellence and innovation in teaching. This becomes all the more important in the light of a second aspect of Rhodes' understanding of its mission in relation to teaching and learning. This is the awareness that educational disadvantage as a legacy of apartheid needs to be engaged with so that all students can "develop their full potential" and achieve the institution's desired graduate attributes.

22.   There are a number of management and support structures that have responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning at Rhodes. Besides the Academic Planning and Staffing Committee and the Quality Assurance Committee, there are specific structures which focus on teaching and learning: the Teaching and Learning Committee (T&LC), the Academic Development Centre and the Staff Development Committee. A number of policies, instruments and strategies have been developed in order to promote, develop, and to some extent, assure the quality of teaching and learning.

23.   Rhodes' *Audit Portfolio* clearly indicates that teaching and learning at the institution takes place in the academic departments and that students are attached to an academic department that take care of their academic progress. In this sense,

HoDs at the institution play a key role in ensuring that students are provided with a high quality and enabling academic experience. The Panel noted that HoDs at Rhodes are elected by their peers for a period of three years. HoDs indicated to the Panel that the overall experience of the 2005 academic review, although work-intensive and highly stressful, was generally regarded as positive by the departments. The Panel did not find the same positive view of the reporting activities that take place in between academic reviews. Neither did the Panel find general agreement as to the practicality and desirability of other forms of reporting on teaching and learning among other individuals and structures involved in the management of quality in teaching and learning. The Panel understands the importance of trust and collegiality in the governance of quality at Rhodes and the institution's concern about avoiding a managerialist approach to education. However, interviews conducted with different layers of academics and management as well as the Panel's analyses of minutes of the relevant committees suggest that this approach allows for the inconsistent application of teaching and learning policies, which might result in uneven quality of provision across departments. Particularly in relation to the academic review, the Panel learned that, despite the preparation and distribution of detailed guidelines - including for the first time since the reviews started in 1997 a section on teaching and learning - these guidelines were not used across the board.

Recommendation 9

The HEQC recommends that Rhodes review its current arrangements for monitoring the implementation of its teaching and learning policies to enable the institution to ensure that high quality teaching is consistently offered across all academic departments, and that appropriate developmental initiatives are in place where required. This should be done in a way that is consonant with the requirements of departmental autonomy and collegiality.

Support Services

24.   Academic development for students at Rhodes has three main foci: the tutorial system located in the academic departments, Extended Studies located in the ADC, and a mentoring system attached to the Extended Studies programme, which is also located in the ADC. The creation of the Extended Studies Unit as part of the ADC was a consequence of changes in the conceptualisation of both student support and academic development. This resulted in the creation of a specialised support system for students located outside the academic programmes and a shift in the focus of the ADC from student support to the development of teaching skills among staff. The Extended Programme is one avenue used by Rhodes to diversify its student admissions. Students enter the programme via

alternative admissions tests as well as through the deans' discretionary power to admit students who do not have the points required to enter Rhodes. Through these avenues more than 100 students were admitted in 2004 to the extended programmes offered in the Faculties of Commerce, Humanities and Science (AP, Appendix 7: 8). In 2004 Rhodes received a three year grant from the DoE to offer Extended Programmes as a result of a proposal submitted by the ADC. The Panel congratulates Rhodes and the ADC for their proactive and innovative approach to the extended curriculum.

Commendation 3

The HEQC commends Rhodes on its initiatives for the professionalisation of teaching and learning at the institution, and the development of a mentoring system to support previously disadvantaged students.

25. The Panel would like to urge the institution to monitor the progress of students involved in extended programmes in order to determine the effectiveness and impact of both the extended curriculum and the mentoring programme in different disciplinary areas. This observation is based on the impression gathered by the Panel during interviews that the reasons for moving the extended curricula into the ESU included the need to shield staff allocated to extended curricula teaching from absorption into mainstream departmental commitments, the need to enhance synergies and common approaches across the various extended curricula, and the greater ease with which cohort studies of student throughput could be conducted.

Recommendation 10

The HEQC recommends that Rhodes develop and implement appropriate mechanisms to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the Extended Studies Unit of the ADC and its programmes. In the design of such mechanisms, the institution should consider the need to document the ways in which extended programmes contribute to the throughput and success rates of different groups of students in different disciplines.

26. The Panel was very impress with the scope, quality and impact of the work of the ADC. In this regard, the Panel would like to stress the importance of providing continuing support for the research on teaching and learning which takes place at the ADC. In this regard the Panel is of the view that many aspects of this research can support the reconceptualisation of quality management as including quality development.

Commendation 4:

The HEQC commends Rhodes University for the quality of the research on teaching and learning undertaken by the staff of the Academic Development Centre.

27. Rhodes has a well-functioning and well-resourced library on the campus that supports academic programmes, research, and the needs of the Grahamstown community. The *Audit Portfolio* indicates that the Library has an impressive collection of electronic journals (30 000 titles) and a comparatively small collection of printed ones. The Library cooperates with other academic libraries locally, nationally and internationally through different consortia and associations for access to electronic databases and meta-search software. The Panel was particularly impressed by the Library support of open access to information and open source software which allows for the international sharing of research done at Rhodes. The Library is in the process of registering with the Open Archives Initiative.

Commendation 5:

The HEQC commends Rhodes on the quality of its library and the many well-planned steps taken to facilitate open access to information and the use of open source software.

28. During the audit site visit, the Panel visited the IT facilities and interviewed senior staff responsible for the IT services. The Panel observed that students at every level have open and free access to the internet from the first day of arrival at the campus. Administrative registration for students includes the details necessary to access IT facilities. Access to Web resources is limited to 20MB per day for all users and the Panel was informed that Rhodes' experience has shown that this is adequate in all cases. The Panel heard that this management of bandwidth has ensured efficient and sustained access for all users.

Commendation 6

The HEQC commends Rhodes for a well-resourced IT system, the provision of staff and student access to sources of knowledge and information through the internet and the intranet, and the effective role of the IT division in responding to the institution's needs and monitoring and managing the quality of its services.

29.   The *Audit Portfolio* did not include an account of Rhodes' approach to managing certification. During the audit site visit, however, a sub-group of the Panel visited the facilities responsible for managing certification and familiarised itself with the procedures. From those interviewed, the Panel learned that batch processing of certificates takes place before the main graduation ceremony in April for students who have completed all the requirements for the conferral of their respective qualifications. The names of graduates are printed from the mainframe student record system developed by the Rhodes Data Management Unit. This is operated by a trained staff member who has authorised password-protected access to the system. The Panel found that the arrangements currently in place are adequate to safeguard the integrity of the student records data.

30.   During interviews with the Panel, Rhodes' staff involved in the offering of short courses indicated that all courses are required to elicit evaluations from participants by means of standardised evaluation forms and the feedback from these are reviewed by the AP&QA office. The results of these evaluations are taken into consideration during the annual application to offer the short course during the following year. The Panel congratulates the institution on its ability to respond to local and national skills needs through the offering of short courses whose quality is carefully assured by the relevant academic structures. The Panel did not find evidence that short courses were monitored from the point of view of their comprehensiveness or effective responsiveness to societal or economic needs. Given the sample of offerings included in the 2005 list of short courses, the Panel is of the view that the institution might be underplaying a potentially important area of its work. The Panel would like to encourage Rhodes to institute some form of monitoring of short courses, which focuses on the interactions between Rhodes and its communities, attendance at the courses, and the cost-benefits which they represent for the institution.

Commendation 7:

The HEQC commends Rhodes for the development and implementation of an effective policy framework and system for the offering of short courses which emphasises the development of quality offerings, thus protecting the reputation of the institution.

Programme Development

31. The Panel is concerned that the there is no consistency between the conceptualisation of teaching and learning, the policies that support this area of work, and the practices of the different academic departments. Rhodes' undertaking to offer research-based teaching and to promote excellence and innovation in teaching depends almost entirely on a voluntaristic approach. Those academics who want to use the possibilities offered by ADC may do so, but the Panel found no evidence of lecturers having an obligation to do so, for example, in relation to the module on assessment of the PCDHE. On the contrary, interviews with different layers of academics and members of structures responsible for teaching and learning suggest that the institution's way of solving the perceived tension between development and accountability, i.e. what the institution calls the "incrementalist approach", might be undermining the actual realisation of Rhodes' mission undertakings in the core functions.

    Recommendation 11

    The HEQC recommends that Rhodes explore an appropriate mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of its voluntarist approach to the evaluation of teaching and learning. This should entail the incorporation of student evaluations of courses in the evaluation of teaching and learning as well as the development of appropriate mechanisms to monitor the extent of and frequency with which evaluation of courses and whole qualifications are being used to improve teaching and learning.

Staff development

32. Interviews with the T&LC and with ADC staff indicated that there is growing awareness in the institution of the need to professionalize teaching and learning activities. These efforts are supported by a number of initiatives. Among them is the New Lecturer's Orientation Course (AP: 69), which in recent years has provided explicit support for teaching and learning issues. The Panel, however, noted in the T&LC's minutes for 2004 that attendance at the Orientation Course was small and that there were difficulties getting some staff members to attend.

The feedback from those that did attend was positive. Through interviews with a range of academics, tutors and students, the Panel gained the impression that there is fairly widespread support for the activities of the ADC and agreement on their positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning at the institution. Staff from the ADC, however, noted that much still remains to be done to extend a culture of reflective practice and educational professionalism more evenly across the institution, sometimes in the face of residual resistance.

Commendation 8:

The HEQC commends Rhodes for the way in which the staff development function of the Academic Development Centre has been conceptualised and implemented, resulting in enhanced levels of professionalism in teaching and learning, especially among young staff.

33.   Interviews with ADC staff, the T&LC, the AP&SC as well as with the QAC indicated that, despite the fact that the ADC is said to have a developmental focus, the Centre has been increasingly taking on monitoring and accountability functions, especially as the demands of a new external quality assurance system have emerged. One example of this is the requirement for the ADC to comment on the teaching and learning dimensions of the academic review process conducted in 2005. Academic staff and ADC staff interviewed by the Panel suggested that quality assurance and institutional development functions may be accruing to the ADC because of their relatively well-developed capacity for these activities compared to, for example, the academic planning structures of the university. In interviews it was noted that the ADC's taking on an accountability function could compromise the developmental dynamic of its work, which has had considerable success. The Panel is of the view that since these additional roles need to be fulfilled, there may be cause to reconceptualise the ADC at several levels.

Recommendation 12

The HEQC recommends that Rhodes review the identity, functions, and resourcing of the Academic Development Centre. This should include a review of its relationship with the university's central academic planning structures and the senior leadership responsible for teaching and learning.

Assessment

34.   The Policy on the Assessment of Student Learning provides for both the formative and summative purposes of assessment, and enjoins appropriate forms of validity, transparency and fairness in assessment practices. In its account of the achievements of this policy, the *Audit Portfolio* argues that the policy "has been very successful in promoting awareness of the fact that assessment is not unproblematic and a matter of commonsense and is, indeed, a contested area". The increased awareness of assessment issues is reflected in the fact that several departments have made proposals for adjustments in the relative proportions of requirements for continuous to summative assessment in their curricula. The *Audit Portfolio* further notes that since 2004, all new staff have been required to take the assessor training module of the PGDHE, and that several senior staff, including deans, have done so as well.

35.   Rhodes does not have an operating policy on external examinations. A draft Policy on External Examinations has yet to be formalised for the undergraduate courses. Staff responsible for assessment and examination structures who were interviewed indicated that the general practice is that external examination does not occur at first and second year level and may occur unevenly at senior levels of undergraduate programmes. The Panel found limited evidence of actual external examiners' reports. Available documentation indicated that external examiners reports are produced and forwarded to HoDs and in some cases to deans in the Faculties of Pharmacy, Education, Law and Commerce, while the arrangements in the Faculties of Science and the Humanities are less structured. It was clear to the Panel that the institution's acknowledgment of the inadequacy of these informal arrangements had prompted the development of the draft policy. Interviews with relevant academic staff indicated that some details of this policy had been controversial and that the policy may need to be developed further.

Recommendation 13

The HEQC recommends that Rhodes formalise its policy on external examinations and ensure that the systems needed to monitor and respond to external examiner reports are effective in achieving appropriate and consistent management of summative assessment at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study.

Student experience (extra-curricular)

36.   The Panel noted with appreciation the resources invested by the institution in the provision of a safe and protective environment for staff and students. The Panel was particularly impressed by the new improvements in the security of the campus. These arrangements benefit all students while they are on campus but are a permanent feature only for those students living in residences. Students living in "digs" in town are inevitably more vulnerable in terms of security.

37.   The University clearly sees participation in the residences as an essential element in the process of socialising new students into university life. However, the institution's difficulty in finding space for all first year students in the residences might deny some new students this key dimension of the Rhodes' student experience. This dimension is likely to be particularly important for black students from poorer backgrounds who could benefit from the academic and cultural resources available through the residence system. The residence system should thus be seen as having a major role in supporting the shift in Rhodes' student equity profile by providing a protective and nurturing environment for those students who are more vulnerable, both socially and academically, when they first enter the higher education system. In other words, the residence system could be seen as a strategic component of a more integrated recruitment strategy. Given Rhodes' current spatial and financial limitations, this might require that, without eliminating the opportunity to experience cultural and social diversity as part of life in the residences, the institution revises, for example, the proportion of foreign student enrolments at undergraduate level and the extent to which they share in the residence space.

38.   The Panel noted that the student experience has several different dimensions including the physical environment, the residence system, the exposure to cultural and ethnic diversity, and the focus on the development of democratic and socially responsible citizens. There is no doubt that Rhodes' students are exposed to a caring and stimulating residence system and campus life, particularly in terms of opportunities to develop leadership skills, and that this is greatly appreciated by the students themselves. The Panel gained the impression that many of these aspects of the student experience are broadly successful. It seems to the Panel that many aspects of the "student experience" operate at the extra-curricular level and that while some are not a matter of individual choice, like the residence system,

others that do depend on personal choice, like the volunteer programme, are attracting a small number of students in relation to Rhodes' overall enrolment.

Commendation 9:

The HEQC commends Rhodes for the many well planned and effective steps that it has taken and the resources that it has made available to provide a nurturing, safe, supportive and stimulating environment for students to acquire skills and to develop as well rounded individuals.

39. Despite the successful aspects of Rhodes provision of a unique "student experience", the Panel is concerned that not all students have the same kind of experience at Rhodes. The institution has itself pointed out in the *Audit Portfolio* that, increasingly, issues of class are playing an important part in a student's ability to fit into the educational and social environment provided by the institution (AP: 94). The Panel is of the view that, as Rhodes transforms its student profile, it will need to revise certain aspects of its conceptualisation of the student experience to take into account a more heterogeneous student body and thus ensure that students with different kinds of social capital can fully participate in and benefit from the full array of Rhodes' offerings. The Panel would like to bring to the institution's attention the fact that, to a large extent, Rhodes' relatively high quality student experience is based on maintaining a very limited growth in student numbers. However, for the institution to improve its equity profile, a measure of growth might be required. The institution will have to devise innovative approaches to solve this apparent contradiction and make the appropriate choices in order to maintain its ethos as a small, residential university that provides a unique student experience and at the same time responds to national imperatives and to its own stated mission.

RESEARCH

40. Rhodes does not define its identity mainly through the performance of research but sees research as an important element in achieving its vision of being an outstanding internationally recognised institution. In this sense the University is "committed to maintaining and further developing its strong culture of research" (AP: 71). The *Audit Portfolio* indicates that research influences teaching and learning in two ways. On the one hand, research is infused into teaching and learning through researchers' incorporation of their research findings, methodologies and experience into the teaching of undergraduate students. On the other hand, teaching and learning as academic practices are guided and supported

by research in education, which constitutes a specific feature of teaching and learning at Rhodes. In this regard, the *Audit Portfolio* presents a number of examples in which these two relationships are successfully established (AP: 99-100).

Commendation 10:

The HEQC commends Rhodes on the successful link between research and teaching established at the Department of Ichthyology and Fisheries Science, in the cluster of departments which deal with English and Linguistics, the Department of Geology and the Environmental Education Studies Unit.

41. One important aspect of the challenge of managing the research function is the identification of institutional priorities and the consistent allocation of resources to those priorities. Members of different committee structures responsible for oversight of the research function at university level who were interviewed by the Panel suggested that a more conscious and deliberate research strategy would be needed to deal with the expansion of research on which the University has embarked. In the Panel's view, this will be especially important in relation to the development of a stronger focus on research that responds to the needs of the Eastern Cape. Operationalising this aspiration might entail, for instance, environmental scans, workshops, and think-tanks that could help the institution to make an informed decision about where to concentrate resources.

Recommendation 14

The HEQC recommends that Rhodes consider the development of a strategy for the expansion of the research function that takes into account the current research profile of the University, its projected activities, and institution level goals, such as contributing to the development of the Eastern Cape.

42. At a small university like Rhodes where research, although an important activity, does not determine the identity of the institution, research support and administration reside in the same portfolio and are the responsibility of the same office. In this case the Dean of Research and the Research Office are the fundamental elements in the management of research at the institution.

Commendation 11:

The HEQC commends Rhodes on the quality of the services provided by the Research Office and its positive impact on the promotion and support of research at the institution.

43.   The Panel interviewed members of the Centre for Entrepreneurship and the Business Unit as well as researchers who have benefited from their interventions. The Panel noted that the institution has been successful in the commercialisation of patents in the case of Rhodes University BioSURE process for the treatment of acidic mine water and the iQhilika Mead Brewery. The Panel congratulates the institution on this initiative, which seems to be producing satisfactory results for the institution and the researchers. The support and encouragement of research has had positive results. The number of university funded research grants has doubled since 1999 and supports more than half of the staff. According to the *Audit Portfolio,* this, together with a relative improvement in Rhodes' accessing of local and international grants, has made it necessary for the research office to employ a research accountant.

Commendation 12

The HEQC commends Rhodes, and in particular the Office of the Dean of Research, for the successful expansion of the research function at Rhodes, which includes the development of support mechanisms the commercialisation of patents and the setting up of incubators, as well as specific support for the humanities and the performing and visual arts.

44.   The quality assurance of research at Rhodes is the direct responsibility of the faculties, which in turn submit research proposals to the JRC. According to the *Audit Portfolio,* the quality of research carried out at Rhodes is assessed in terms of outputs (journal articles, books, artefacts, conference proceedings) which, in turn, are assessed in relation to their impact. Other factors taken into account to ascertain the quality of research produced at Rhodes are the standing of the researchers among peers, the NRF ratings, external evaluations, and the number, quality, graduation rates, and employment profile of postgraduate students.

45. All faculties have research committees responsible for ensuring that all research proposals comply with the required ethical standards. Above these structures is the University Ethics Committee to which all matters concerning research ethics are referred. This committee is chaired by an appropriately qualified academic and includes a medical doctor from outside the University.

Commendation 13
The HEQC commends the University for the steps taken to ensure that careful and appropriate arrangements are in place for the ethical clearance of all its research projects.

46.   In terms of DoE recognised research outputs, Rhodes is one of the most productive universities in the country in relation to the size of its permanent academic staff. Despite this, Rhodes, like all other HEIs, does not meet the benchmark set by the DoE of 1 research output per full-time permanent staff member. In terms of the age of the authors, almost half (44.5 percent) of the journal articles published by Rhodes' academics in 2003 were authored by individuals between 50 and more than 60 years old, followed by academics in their forties (43.6 percent), and just above 11 percent authored by academics in their thirties and younger. This situation is acknowledged by the institution as a problem. One of the areas for improvement identified for the research core function in the *Audit* Portfolio is that particular attention needs to be paid to the provision of additional support for new staff to become active researchers (AP: 95).

Recommendation 15

The HEQC recommends that Rhodes consider the development of a comprehensive strategy to recruit new researchers and increase the number of research outputs. The strategy should take into account the urgent need to change the demographics of research production at the institution.

47.   In relation to Rhodes' postgraduate academic profile, the data indicates that the largest increase in numbers is at the masters' level and the largest concentration of doctoral students is in the science fields. The Panel notes that the further development of strengths in the natural sciences will, to a certain extent, alter Rhodes' identity as a university predominantly focused on the humanities. Taking this into account, the Panel is of the view that Rhodes needs to make clear whether the expansion of postgraduate enrolments is targeted to specific disciplinary fields. At the same time, given the pressing need to improve the equity profile of enrolments, the institution also needs to think of having an enrolment strategy targeted at increasing the number of South African black students at postgraduate level.

Recommendation 16
The HEQC recommends that the institution develop a recruitment strategy for postgraduate students that takes into account the disciplinary areas prioritised by the institution and the consequences this might have for Rhodes' identity as a liberal arts college, the unevenness in research production across departments, and the need to change the University's equity profile. Such a strategy will need to be regularly monitored and appropriately resourced.

48.   In order for Rhodes to achieve a substantive increase in the number of postgraduate students in the short term, the institution will have to recruit students with potential but who might not be top students. Much more attention and close supervision will be needed for these students and the institution will have to make sure that both extra support and adequate supervision are available for these students across all departments. Both the *Academic Review* and the *Audit Portfolio* mention the interactions between the Dean of Research and the ADC, especially in relation to writing skills for postgraduate students. The Panel concurs with the institution that the forms of support offered by the ADC are essential in the education of postgraduate students.

Recommendation 17
The HEQC recommends that the University consider the possibility of increasing its support for those activities of the Academic Development Centre which are focused on the development of generic competencies and skills of postgraduate students.

49.   Supervision is an area in which Rhodes has introduced changes in order to improve the system. The *Audit Portfolio* (AP: 76) indicates that the implementation of the new policy has highlighted several cases of poor supervision and has allowed for improvement interventions. The Office of the Dean of Research monitors the time taken to complete theses. Problems between supervisors and students are dealt with confidentially by the Dean of Research. The examination process includes three external examiners for doctoral degrees while masters' theses are examined internally. Doctoral examiners' reports are considered by a Committee of Assessors that includes the Dean of Research (chairperson), HoD, the supervisor and at least three senior members of the faculty. Recommendations from this committee are submitted to the Vice-Chancellor for approval. The system seems to be sound and works well at the doctoral level. During the audit visit, the Panel had the opportunity of discussing this system with members of the Committee of Assessors and the Vice-

Chancellor. The Panel was concerned about the fact that the Vice-Chancellor's involvement in the process of assessment leaves students with no instance of redress should conflicts arise in relation to the thesis mark.

Recommendation 18

The HEQC recommends that the institution consider the possibility of making international external examiners a requirement for PhDs, and create a procedure for appeals in the process of the examination of postgraduate degrees within the institution.

50. From the point of view of the student experience, postgraduate students are introduced to Rhodes through a process of departmental orientation, peer orientation, a University-wide orientation day, and special information sessions by the Library and the IT Divisions. In 2003, partially as a response to a request from postgraduate students, the institution created the Postgraduate Liaison Committee (PGLC). Besides having its own meetings and discussing concerns about specific aspects of postgraduate education, the PGLC is a sub-committee of the JRC and its president participates in the JRC meetings. The Panel met with the PGLC and with a range of postgraduate students from different disciplines, social backgrounds and nationalities. Generally, students were satisfied with their experiences of supervision and support at Rhodes.

Commendation 14

The HEQC commends Rhodes on the creation of the Postgraduate Liaison Committee as a sub-committee of the Joint Research Committee and for the introduction of a system for reporting on the progress of postgraduate degrees that includes students.

Community Engagement

51. The university has a long history of community engagement through the Centre for Social Development (CSD) that goes back to the second half of the 1970s. Besides the existence of the CSD, individuals and academic departments have had different types of cooperative relationships with Rhodes' neighbouring communities. According to the *Audit Portfolio*, this situation not only needed coordination but also as Rhodes' approach to its surrounding community was perceived as aloof, it needed to be reviewed (AP: 82). Given the institution's stake in the economy and social conditions in the area,[2] the institution decided to develop a new approach to community engagement in 1999. The institution makes an explicit connection between transformation and community

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[2] Rhodes contributes 66 percent of Grahamstown's GDP.

engagement. In this sense the process initiated in 1999 has given Rhodes the opportunity of redefining its identity in relation to both its immediate environment and the Eastern Cape Province in general.

52.   The Panel would like to encourage the institution to include in its new community engagement policy, instruments to assess the quality of the initiatives and suitable forms of monitoring and impact evaluations that could support the improvement of the interactions between community engagement, research and teaching and learning.

Recommendation 19

The HEQC recommends that the University develop suitable mechanisms for the quality management of the community engagement core function, which takes into account the differences between community engagement, service learning and voluntarism. This should include the development of a closer interaction between the quality related arrangements and requirements for community engagement and those for the other two core functions.

53.   In the Panel's view, the breadth of the community engagement activities makes all the more necessary the implementation of suitable quality assurance mechanisms. Such mechanisms could help to assess whether communities and students are obtaining the expected benefits from these programmes, ensure adequate, regular and structured feedback on the impact of these activities, and channel the knowledge developed through them into processes for the improvement of conceptions and practices of community engagement.

Commendation 15:

The HEQC commends Rhodes for the breadth of its community related activities and for having taken an approach to community engagement that has strong potential to transform the relationship between the institution and its communities.

List of Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

1. The Panel commends the institution for the development of programmes and qualifications which respond to specific regional needs, and encourages it to explore further additional areas of responsiveness where it could maximise the synergies between the three core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement within a disciplinary as well as a multidisciplinary framework.

2. The HEQC commends Rhodes on the utilisation of the academic reviews as instruments for planning, resource allocation and quality assurance, which afford the institution an opportunity for self-reflection and integration of department specific information into institution level analysis

3. The HEQC commends Rhodes on its initiatives for the professionalisation of teaching and learning at the institution, and the development of a mentoring system to support previously disadvantaged students.

4. The HEQC commends Rhodes University for the quality of the research on teaching and learning undertaken by the staff of the Academic Development Centre.

5. The HEQC commends Rhodes on the quality of its library and the many well-planned steps taken to facilitate open access to information and the use of open source software.

6. The HEQC commends Rhodes for a well-resourced IT system, the provision of staff and student access to sources of knowledge and information through the internet and the intranet, and the effective role of the IT division in responding to the institution's needs and monitoring and managing the quality of its services.

7.   The HEQC commends Rhodes for the development and implementation of an effective policy framework and system for the offering of short courses which emphasises the development of quality offerings, thus protecting the reputation of the institution.

8.   The HEQC commends Rhodes for the way in which the staff development function of the Academic Development Centre has been conceptualised and implemented, resulting in enhanced levels of professionalism in teaching and learning, especially among young staff.

9.   The HEQC commends Rhodes for the many well planned and effective steps that it has taken and the resources that it has made available to provide a nurturing, safe, supportive and stimulating environment for students to acquire skills and to develop as well rounded individuals.

10.   The HEQC commends Rhodes on the successful link between research and teaching established at the Department of Ichthyology and Fisheries Science, in the cluster of departments which deal with English and Linguistics, the Department of Geology and the Environmental Education Studies Unit.

11.   The HEQC commends Rhodes on the quality of the services provided by the Research Office and its positive impact on the promotion and support of research at the institution.

12.   The HEQC commends Rhodes, and in particular the Office of the Dean of Research, for the successful expansion of the research function at Rhodes, which includes the development of support mechanisms the commercialisation of patents and the setting up of incubators, as well as specific support for the humanities and the performing and visual arts.

13.   The HEQC commends the University for the steps taken to ensure that careful and appropriate arrangements are in place for the ethical clearance of all its research projects.

14.   The HEQC commends Rhodes on the creation of the Postgraduate Liaison Committee as a sub-committee of the Joint Research Committee and for the introduction of a system for reporting on the progress of postgraduate degrees that includes students.

15.   The HEQC commends Rhodes for the breadth of its community related activities and for having taken an approach to community engagement that has strong potential to transform the relationship between the institution and its communities.

Recommendations

1.   The HEQC recommends that, if Rhodes retains the notion of being a liberal arts university, the University consider the possibility of initiating institution-wide debate about the liberal arts tradition in order to contextualise its value and currency in South Africa and address its compatibility with the University's claimed African identity. Such a debate may provide critical reference points for the discharge of the three core functions and for conceptions of quality in those core functions.

2.   The HEQC recommends that Rhodes give continuing attention to the development of a fuller conceptual framework for internationalisation, foster wide debate at the University on how internationalisation could be given expression in the different core functions, and how it could be made compatible with local and regional objectives and the African identity signalled in the institution's mission and vision.

3.   The HEQC recommends that, in order to accelerate improvement in its redress and equity profile, Rhodes develop a recruitment strategy that indicates firstly, institutional enrolment targets for African, Coloured and Indian students; secondly, the resources and mechanisms that will be put in place in order to achieve these targets, and thirdly, the support mechanisms which the University will institute in order to facilitate the academic success of students.

4.   The HEQC recommends that the University give urgent attention to the consolidation of the institution's emerging policies on staff equity. This would entail the development of an integrated equity plan that should include a comprehensive strategy focused on recruitment as well as on development programmes and support structures to achieve better and faster results in changing Rhodes' staff equity profile.

5. The HEQC recommends that the University consider the development of a bold and transparent strategy to address negative aspects of its institutional culture. This needs to include an institution-wide implementation plan to transform relevant aspects of Rhodes' institutional culture and clear monitoring mechanisms to track progress.

6. The HEQC recommends that Rhodes engage with the issue of how, within a decentralised system of quality management, faculties and academic departments could actively engage with and give expression to the achievement of institutional level objectives, which pertain to the conception of quality both as fitness for and fitness of purpose.

7. The HEQC recommends that Rhodes consider, within its framework of collegial governance, a re-conceptualisation of quality management to give greater weight to quality support, development and monitoring as strategic tools for the achievement of institutional level objectives.

8. The HEQC recommends that Rhodes consider the identification and use of a set of performance indicators which could reinforce the institution's planning and quality management functions, and explore the utilisation of suitable benchmarking tools in a formalised and regular manner to support decision-making for academic planning and quality improvement.

9. The HEQC recommends that Rhodes review its current arrangements for monitoring the implementation of its teaching and learning policies to enable the institution to ensure that high quality teaching is consistently offered across all academic departments, and that appropriate developmental initiatives are in place where required. This should be done in a way that is consonant with the requirements of departmental autonomy and collegiality.

10. The HEQC recommends that Rhodes develop and implement appropriate mechanisms to monitor and assess the effectiveness of the Extended Studies Unit of the ADC and its programmes. In the design of such mechanisms, the institution should consider the need to document the ways in which extended programmes contribute to the throughput and success rates of different groups of students in different disciplines.

11. The HEQC recommends that Rhodes explore an appropriate mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of its voluntarist approach to the evaluation of teaching and learning. This should entail the incorporation of student evaluations of courses in the evaluation of teaching and learning as well as the development of appropriate mechanisms to monitor the extent of and frequency with which evaluation of courses and whole qualifications are being used to improve teaching and learning.

12. The HEQC recommends that Rhodes review the identity, functions, and resourcing of the Academic Development Centre. This should include a review of its relationship with the university's central academic planning structures and the senior leadership responsible for teaching and learning

13. The HEQC recommends that Rhodes formalise its policy on external examinations and ensure that the systems needed to monitor and respond to external examiner reports are effective in achieving appropriate and consistent management of summative assessment at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study.

14. The HEQC recommends that Rhodes consider the development of a strategy for the expansion of the research function that takes into account the current research profile of the University, its projected activities, and institution level goals, such as contributing to the development of the Eastern Cape.

15. The HEQC recommends that Rhodes consider the development of a comprehensive strategy to recruit new researchers and increase the number of research outputs. The strategy should take into account the urgent need to change the demographics of research production at the institution.

16. The HEQC recommends that the institution develop a recruitment strategy for postgraduate students that takes into account the disciplinary areas prioritised by the institution and the consequences this might have for Rhodes' identity as a liberal arts college, the unevenness in research production across departments, and the need to change the University's equity profile. Such a strategy will need to be regularly monitored and appropriately resourced.

17.   The HEQC recommends that the University consider the possibility of increasing its support for those activities of the Academic Development Centre which are focused on the development of generic competencies and skills of postgraduate students.

18.   The HEQC recommends that the institution consider the possibility of making international external examiners a requirement for PhDs, and create a procedure for appeals in the process of the examination of postgraduate degrees within the institution.

19.   The HEQC recommends that the University develop suitable mechanisms for the quality management of the community engagement core function, which takes into account the differences between community engagement, service learning and voluntarism. This should include the development of a closer interaction between the quality related arrangements and requirements for community engagement and those for the other two core functions.