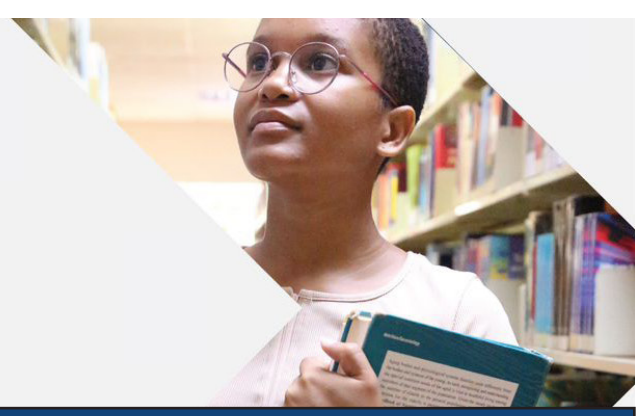




University of Venda
Creating Future Leaders

UNIVEN Weekly e-Newsletter



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University of Venda Launches Successful Campaign Against Examination Irregularities at Greenstone Residences

On 21 October 2024, the University of Venda's Departments of Legal Services, Student Affairs and Marketing, Branding and Communication conducted a successful campaign at Greenstone Residences aimed at raising awareness about examination irregularities. More than 300 students, including many first-year students, gathered to learn about the serious consequences of academic dishonesty.

Mrs Sibongile Machimana, a staff member in the Legal Services Department, emphasised the importance of fostering awareness among students regarding the impact of examination irregularities. "It is essential to establish an awareness campaign to promote academic integrity and a culture of honesty," she said.



On photo: Mrs Sibongile Machimana, Advocate Irene Mukwevho, and Mr Emmanuel Masindi pose for a photo with students during engagements

Machimana explained that a lack of awareness about university policies could lead to actions that may constitute examination irregularities, or to misunderstandings about the severity of their consequences. Students often feel overwhelmed by academic pressure, which may tempt them to engage in dishonest behaviour. However, she highlighted that many students may not fully understand the long-term implications of such actions.

She also expressed a strong warning about plagiarism, defining it as the act of presenting someone else's work, ideas, or words as one's own without proper citation. Machimana pointed out that plagiarism is a serious academic violation with severe repercussions.

Mr Emmanuel Masindi, from the Legal Services Department, elaborated on the potential consequences of examination irregularities. These could include academic penalties such as suspension, or even expulsion. Additionally, students could face damage to their personal credibility and reputation, loss of financial aid or scholarships, difficulty securing employment or pursuing graduate school opportunities, and ongoing feelings of guilt and stress.

The event also provided students with the opportunity to ask questions and engage in open dialogue, further reinforcing the importance of academic integrity and understanding university policies.



Event organisers and landlords pose for a group photo with the students

In closing, Mr Khuthadzo Rammela, the landlord of Greenstone Residences, expressed gratitude to the University of Venda for its dedication to supporting the welfare of off-campus students.



Mr Khuthadzo Rammela, the landlord, delivers closing remarks

IPQA hosts an informative 2024 Enrolment Planning and HEMIS Workshop

On 1st–2nd October 2024, the University of Venda (UNIVEN), through its Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance (IPQA) directorate, hosted a two-day workshop focusing on Enrolment Planning and HEMIS (Higher Education Management Information System). The workshop, held at the Premier Hotel in Thohoyandou, was facilitated by the renowned sector expert Ms Jean Skene, a retired specialist with extensive experience in enrolment planning, HEMIS statutory reporting, PQM alignment, and university subsidy allocations.

As UNIVEN prepares for the 2026–2030 enrolment cycle, the focus of Day 1 was on

critically assessing the university's current enrolment trends and projections for the upcoming cycle. This session aimed to evaluate the revised enrolment targets for 2023–2025, exploring institutional growth opportunities across various qualification types and evaluating the university's capacity in terms of faculty members with doctoral qualifications.

Ms Skene opened the session by discussing the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) expectations and the three key steering mechanisms essential for transforming higher education: planning, funding, and quality assurance.



Ms Skene stressed the importance of accurate data entry into the university's information systems, which track crucial data on students, staff, finances, infrastructure, and more. Reliable data is essential for institutional planning and securing funding, making it imperative for data owners to ensure accuracy in their data capture processes.

She emphasised that enrolment planning should align with broader institutional strategies, national plans such as the National Development Plan (NDP), and the country's human resource strategy.



Ms Skene also highlighted the importance of adhering to audit guidelines to avoid serious data errors, which can only be waived with DHET approval. She emphasised that the university should maintain alignment between its Strategic Plan, Annual Performance Plan, Annual Report, Budget Documents, and Mid-Year Performance Report.

Regarding PQM alignment, Ms Skene encouraged the university to understand the objectives of its Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) and focus on maintaining institutional strengths while enhancing the quality of offerings. This approach would help address national goals such as improving throughput and graduation rates and ensuring institutional efficiency and effectiveness in line with the National Plan.

Attendees included Executive Deans, Deputy Deans (Teaching and Learning, and Research), Faculty Heads, Faculty Managers, Deputy Registrar, Strategy and Risk colleagues, and IPQA staff. The workshop adopted a consultative approach, facilitating robust discussions to enhance the university's understanding of the enrolment plan's critical role in meeting ministerial targets.



A group photo of the workshop attendees

An important outcome was the establishment of the Institutional Enrolment Management Committee, a body tasked with overseeing enrolment management, student recruitment, admissions, retention plans, and monitoring enrolment performance against set targets. The committee will also be responsible for reporting any deviations to the DHET.

The second-day session was attended by Deputy Deans, Faculty Heads, Faculty Managers, Administrators, Assistant Registrars, Strategy and Risk colleagues, Finance and HR Business Partners, and the IPQA team. The discussions focused on the university's internal operations and how they align with broader strategic objectives to achieve national goals in higher education.

UNIVEN is set to submit its draft enrolment plan and narrative report by 31st October 2024.

The focus on Day 2 was on Data Quality and Integrity, HEMIS Audit and Reporting, PQM Alignment, and Internal Operations.

Inspiring Melodies and Fresh Perspectives: A Transformative Experience at Kabarak University

On 07 – 08 October 2024, Dr Meisie Madzivhandila and her colleague, Dr Thulani Zulu, had the privilege of attending an eye-opening conference at Kabarak University, Kenya. Themed *Innovations in Higher Education and the Role of Technology*, the event brought together thought leaders from across Africa to explore how technology is reshaping the educational landscape.



On photo: Dr Meisie Madzivhandila when presenting her paper at Kabarak University



Dr Meisie Madzivhandila (right), Dr Thulani Zulu (left) from University of Venda and Mrs Ketty from Kabarak University

Dr Madzivhandila presented a compelling paper titled **The Origin of Tshifasi: A Historic Perspective**, where she shared insights into the cultural heritage of Tshifasi music among the Vhavenda people. Her presentation resonated deeply with the audience, sparking passionate discussions about the urgent need to preserve indigenous music in an increasingly digitised world. The conference buzzed with energy as attendees explored innovative ways to merge tradition with technological advancements in music and media education.

One of the most powerful takeaways for Dr Madzivhandila was Kabarak University's progressive approach to music education. The Music Department's choir, led by an inspiring female conductor, delivered a remarkable performance that blended technical precision with profound cultural meaning. Witnessing such strong female leadership—still a rarity in many institutions—was particularly impactful, underscoring the importance of empowering future leaders.

Kabarak's emphasis on student innovation, well-being, and leadership through music left a lasting impression. Their forward-thinking approach provides invaluable insights for transforming music education at other institutions. Reflecting on her experience, Dr Madzivhandila said, "As we plan for 2025, I am excited about incorporating some of these fresh ideas—especially those that foster creativity, inclusivity, and leadership. I believe this will spark a wave of innovation and cultural pride within our own programme."

Directorate of Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance (IPQA) Hosts Successful Quality Assurance Awareness Workshop

On 08 October 2024, the Directorate of Institutional Planning and Quality Assurance (IPQA), through its Quality Assurance Unit (QAU), successfully hosted a Quality Assurance Awareness Workshop at the Avoca Vale Country Hotel in Makhado.

The event, supported by the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDP), aimed to enhance awareness of quality assurance processes both internally and externally among the university's academic staff.



Some of the workshop attendees

The IPQA serves as a vital resource within the university, providing strategic direction in quality assurance through initiatives such as departmental reviews, programme development and reviews, accreditation, qualification registration on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and the management of the Programme Qualification Mix (PQM). The workshop's primary goal was to deepen understanding of quality assurance processes, ensuring all staff are equipped to contribute to the university's commitment to continuous improvement.

The session was led by members of the Quality Assurance Unit, including Mr Lufuno Netshifhefhe, Mr Emmanuel Thagwana and Mrs Livhuwani Mulelu-Baloyi, who used interactive methods to engage participants and encourage open dialogue on key quality assurance matters.

In her opening remarks, Dr Sannah Mativandlela, Director of IPQA, highlighted the importance of conducting regular Self-Evaluation Reviews (SER) across various university divisions. She also provided an update on the development of the Improvement Plan following the 2022 Council on Higher Education (CHE) institutional audit. Dr Mativandlela emphasised the significance of adhering to the CHE's Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), stressing its implications for the institution's long-term academic and operational success.

Mr Netshifhefhe focused on the newly implemented Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), which came into effect at the start of 2024. He underscored the need for a robust Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) mechanism to maintain and improve quality across the university.

Mr Netshifhefhe stressed that the Self-Evaluation Review (SER) process, as outlined in the Quality Assurance Policy (QA), must be regularly conducted to ensure the quality of academic projects and activities. He emphasised that critical self-evaluation followed by peer evaluation are essential steps for maintaining and enhancing the university's quality culture and ensuring continuous improvement.

Mrs Mulelu-Baloyi's presentation focused on the institutional preparedness necessary for offering new programmes. She detailed the steps involved in the development of new programmes and amendments to existing ones, highlighting key conditions that must be met for a programme to be offered. These include:

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) approval for inclusion in the Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM), Council on Higher Education (CHE) accreditation, South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) registration on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for professional qualifications, accreditation by the relevant professional body, such as SANC, ECSA, or SACNASP.

Mrs Mulelu-Baloyi also shared policies, guidelines, and templates applicable to assist participants through these processes, emphasising the need for further engagement with colleagues planning to undergo these procedures.

Mr Thagwana's session focused on the importance of correctly allocating credits and notional hours in line with SAQA guidelines, which stipulate that one credit equals 10 notional hours. He discussed the need for strict adherence to these standards and the implications of accurately naming programmes as approved to avoid potential issues during accreditation and registration. Mr Thagwana also emphasised the role of service modules and the necessity of implementing them as designed by the host department.

The workshop provided a platform for participants to identify both strengths and weaknesses in the university's Internal and External Quality Assurance processes across various divisions. Attendees discussed ways to improve the effectiveness of faculty quality assurance committees, emphasising the need for robust reporting to the Institutional Quality Assurance Committee (IQAC).

The participants recognised the importance of decentralising quality assurance efforts, acknowledging that quality is not solely the responsibility of the IPQA but is shared across the institution. It was agreed that ongoing workshops would be held over the next two years, involving all sections of the university to ensure a comprehensive, institution-wide approach to quality.

In her closing remarks, Prof Tharien van der Walt, Deputy Dean of Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Management, Commerce,

and Law, reinforced the importance of the issues discussed during the workshop. She warned of the potential consequences of neglecting quality assurance processes, including reputational damage and the risk of losing accreditation for programmes. Prof van der Walt encouraged the IPQA to continue hosting awareness workshops, ensuring that all stakeholders recognise the pivotal role they play in upholding the university's quality standards.

The successful hosting of this workshop marks an important step in strengthening quality assurance across the university. By fostering an environment of continuous learning and improvement, the IPQA is committed to ensuring that quality remains at the heart of all academic and institutional activities.

If you spot anything out of the ordinary on campus - contact the University Hotline by calling toll free number 0800 212 755 or email: univenhotline@tip-offs.com

Improper conduct includes the following...

- 1. Financial misconduct,**
- 2. Misuse or misappropriation of University assets,**
- 3. Health and safety risks,**
- 4. Plagiarism,**
- 5. Fraud and corruption.**