



QUALITY MANAGEMENT DIRECTORATE.

Dear

- Council members
- Executive Management
- Dean's
- Assistant Deans
- Alumni
- Industry partners, and
- Academic and support staff of CPUT, and
- Students
- All protocols observed

It is my pleasure to welcome you here today, to the launch of the second Institutional Audit for our University.

In 2010, five years after the merger, CPUT underwent the first Institutional Audit. The recommendations from the Council on Higher Education were incorporated into the Institutional Quality Improvement Plan and quality improvement activities were initiated in crosscutting areas such as governance, transformation, institutional culture and communication, as well as in specific functions such as library provision, research, HR, security and residences. The main focus of the Institutional Quality Improvement Plan was to encourage integration across the many faculties, units and campuses of CPUT and to concentrate on activities that enhanced the teaching and learning processes, the student experience and student success. This plan was successfully closed out by the Council on Higher Education on the 5th February, 2014.

In the words of the CHE to CPUT:

The Institutional Audits Committee, a sub-committee of the HEQC, was impressed with the thorough way in which all of the recommendations from the audit report were addressed. The HEQC indicated that the progress report was a mature and courageous self-reflection.

Since then we have been moving through a period of unsurpassed change in Higher Education. First the merger scenarios, then the transformation from a Technikon to a University of Technology with a well-established research programme, Community Engagement projects and relevant T&L philosophies and practices, that further the implementation of the HEQSF aligned qualifications, and our transition to a One Smart University.

Our transformation agenda, an important consideration in the audit, expanded to include the broader transformation imperatives underpinning meaningful and relevant change of the University. To this end, we embarked on a series of strategic planning and risk management exercises, the result of which provided a road map for the future. We resolved to reduce the dropout rate, and increase student retention, pass rates and throughput rates, by focusing on the first year experience. To attain this, we started a number of initiatives, which include an Extended Orientation Programme, using the Learner Management System for the early identification of students at-risk and providing informative analytics. We strengthened the tutor and mentor programme, and created new and effective learning spaces. We also resolved to improve the qualifications of academic staff and increase our PhD staff compliment from 16% to 55% by 2020, with a corresponding increase in research output.

We responded to the rapidly changing technological and teaching demands that were required for CPUT to respond to the pandemic, in a constructive and meaningful manner. Restrictions on public gatherings meant that all contact activities were suspended, and, under huge pressure, we moved to emergency remote teaching, learning and assessment, in a short period of time. The way in which institutions managed these changes and disruptions will form an important part of the institutional audits during, and immediately after, the pandemic.

We revised the University's vision. We developed the goals for the University and have embedded these firmly in our qualifications and academic project. At that time, we were mindful that we had to choose our goals appropriately. We set out to develop the research framework that sets today's foundation for our 2030 strategy embodied in "One Smart CPUT". In the midst of the pandemic we



took part in the CHE's Doctoral Qualification Review and now we prepare for the second HEQC's Institutional Audit.

What is the function of the institutional audit?

In a sense, it takes a snapshot of our academic and strategic activities and through reflexive praxis and peer evaluation, evaluates our actions against the student experience and student success. It helps us to develop along a line of continuous improvement, as long as we are open and honest with declaring our strengths and weaknesses.

Merely increasing the number of graduates is not enough. Increasing graduates must go hand-in-hand with ensuring and increasing the quality of our courses. Focusing on numerical targets without a corresponding focus on quality does a disservice to students and society, and that is the essence of this particular meeting, quantity must go hand in hand with quality. At CPUT we want to produce students that stand out in their own right and in their communities. They must be unique and they must have the distinguishing quality of caring about people. We want to talk about the many caring graduates we have produced, that are understanding of the context in which they operate, are ethical, environmentally conscious and supportive of the sustainability of our mother-earth planet. We have a duty to send our graduates out into the world with a well-defined sense of self and with a set of attributes that add value to themselves and society in general. Embedded in our re-curriculation process is the very essence of the attributes with which we are intending to equip our students.

The audit may be further differentiated into 'fitness of purpose' and 'fitness for purpose'. 'Fitness of purpose' evaluates our mission's responsiveness to the local, national and international context, with specific emphasis on transformation. Fitness for purpose seeks to evaluate how our mission drives the institution and to what extent we add value in relation to the full range of higher education purposes set out for Universities. A differentiated approach is followed in which institutions are evaluated in terms of their own vision, mission and goals, as well as their identity, context and location, and their quality assurance maturity.

The principled methodology that underpins institutional audits, namely institutional self-reflection and peer review, remains unchanged in this audit. The value from the internal self-reflection and reflexive praxis will add substantial value to CPUT's journey to becoming a SMART University.



To accommodate the pandemic, the Institutional Audit moves mainly into the virtual space, with a possibility that site visits may still include a physical touch by the CHE. I will leave the details on this to Dr. Siyanda Makaula, who is the Institutional Coordinator for CPUT, to address during his presentation.

This intention of the CHE is that this audit will be used to determine the extent of an institution's capability to use an Integrated Quality Management System and processes to improve the quality of teaching and learning and assessment, research and the institution's integrated engagement with the community. The emphasis is less on assuring that quality thresholds are met than on assuring an integrated, deliberate, continuous, systematic and measurable improvement in the student experience and their own efforts to achieve success.

The notion of student success is broadened to include all dimensions related to student progress and benefit, equality in access and success and value to society. In the words of John Legend, "the best way to fight poverty is to empower people through access to quality education". Access to quality education in higher education is a major driver in fighting poverty and inequality in our society. CPUT is responsive to the needs of our students, our industry, and the broader national developmental objectives. We therefore engage with the Institutional Audit under the auspices of the CHE, not in response to national policy but rather in our own desire to enhance the quality of the student experience and produce increasing numbers of graduates, grounded in qualities that benefit themselves, their fields of study and the nation. We consider this initiative of the CHE to be a strategic enabler, which we will use to take CPUT forward in our quest for excellence. This needs to be cascaded down through the institution to the Unit, faculty and departmental level and CPUT standards for excellence set at all levels.

These principles align with those in the new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) that overarches the work of the HEQC and CHE going forward. The new round of Institutional Audits will therefore form part of the important preparation undertaken by institutions for the full implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework, without furthering the inequalities in the Higher Education system. The maturity of a university's Quality Management System will reflect the control a university has of the quality of their qualifications. The current focus of the CHE is to shift the quality paradigm from external audits to an internal Quality Assurance focus within a University. To support this move, by the CHE across the Higher Education landscape, we need



to be moving to embedding quality as a culture in the institution and not see it as contained within a unit.

The details of the CHE requirements, CPUT's Institutional Audit structure and the project plan, I will leave to Dr Makaula to explain. He has the full support of EM in this review. You will see that this is a comprehensive exercise involving the entire CPUT environment. Consideration will be given to all policies, protocols and procedures, as well as their implementation at CPUT. All stakeholder groups involved with CPUT studies, within and outside the university, will be provided the opportunity to comment and give their views on their experiences. It is sufficient for me to let you know that I support the project fully and expect each of you to lend your vast knowledge and experience in reviewing the standing of our University according to the requirements and deadlines of the CHE.

I am reminded of a quote by Nelson Mandela, the Father of our Nation, which I've expanded with a message by Audrey Hepburn, also a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. A quality education has the power to transform societies in a single generation, provide children with the protection they need from the hazards of poverty, labor exploitation and disease, and given them the knowledge, skills, and confidence to reach their full potential".

Desmond Tutu believed, "Inclusive, good-quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies". If we all have a shared vision and a common understanding of this journey of excellence, then achieving greatness is possible. Let us all continue to join hands in our quest of build a citadel of learning, in our quest of building a smart university and.....to make our university great!

With these words I will hand over to Dr. Makaula, who I would like to thank for taking this quest forward but, I would be remiss if I do not say thank you to all of you. Thank you.

