

QUALITY REVIEWS OF SERVICE AND SUPPORT DIVISIONS A Workshop

Prof Hester Geysler, Ina Pretorius, Sandra van Heerden
University of Johannesburg, South Africa

The purpose of this workshop is to reflect on quality reviews as conducted in the service and support divisions in the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in South Africa and their possible application in other institutions of higher education. Service and support divisions refer to all units outside academic faculties that provide services and support to faculties in the areas of teaching and learning, research and community engagement (the core functions of the UJ) and include academic development of staff and students.

Quality is defined as continuous improvement in the UJ Quality Improvement Policy. The cycle of continuous improvement underpins the UJ Quality Improvement Plan: 2010-2016 that includes different units of analysis, e.g. modules, programmes, academic departments and also service and support divisions. The UJ quality system is also aligned with the national framework in terms of criteria for self-evaluation and peer reviews.

In the workshop, the review process in service and support divisions are addressed, with special reference to:

- the quality promotion system
- the purpose of quality reviews in the service and support divisions
- the identification, prioritisation and scheduling of service and support divisions for reviews
- support, e.g. introductory discussions, workshops, support materials, etc.
- the self-evaluation report and the site visit(s) by the peer review panel
- the peer review report, improvement plan, progress reports and reporting lines
- financial and HR implications
- reflection by and feedback from divisions after the peer review.

Challenges include the involvement of students in the process, the flexibility of the UJ Quality Improvement Plan and the lack of managerial, writing, etc. skills in some of the divisions and sub-units. Collaboration with other support divisions, alignment with new initiatives and priorities in the University requires regular revisions of the Quality Promotion Plan. Closing the quality cycle by feeding review results into the next cycle of planning remains an ongoing challenge.

This interactive workshop is meant for institutional quality managers. Although the UJ experience is discussed (with examples), the discussions and workshop activities focus on applications in the various institutions that may be represented in the workshop.