

WHITE PAPER SEMINAR SERIES: NUMBER 2
MATTERS ARISING FROM THE WHITE PAPER:

#	MATTER ARISING	COMMENT	RANKING
1	Institutions need to look at permutations for increased access	• There are cost implications to increased access: however, the primary reason for DE is to increase access within the parameters of economies of scale – ODL is about reducing the unit cost of learning and Unisa must still analyse whether it has achieved this purpose. The fact is that NSFAS remains a loan to students – and the WP is limited in that it fails to reflect on providing ‘cheaper’ education – how do we reduce the cost of education for our students. • There are carry-capacity considerations that must be managed as they speak to the fundamental issues of quality and service delivery and general inefficiencies. • Enrolment planning and management is an important and necessary consideration and needs to be balanced against the aspiration of increased access • There is no real dissonance between enrolment management and increased access – enrolment management ensures that we focus on the relevance of the offerings by the University • The tensions between cost, quality and access remain apposite – and we need to work our plan so that there is a balance between the 3 imperatives of the so-called iron triangle. • Increased access requires a broadening of the PQM to attract students • Increased access must be responsible and Unisa should avoid becoming caught up in the emotion of the social mandate. • Point to note: increased access is not only about	

		student numbers but is also about increased access to knowledge – epistemological access. • At Unisa there is talk and investment about how we teach but there should be more robust discussion on ‘transformative pedagogy’ insofar as it relates to the access to knowledge by students	
2	There is a critical focus on access for success	• There must be a strategy for the rigorous management of student performance i.e. success and throughput • The strategy must define academic support needs • The concomitant plan must contain clear features to improve motivation in the student walk • We should enhance student services which will have a ripple effect on student success • Improved success and throughput in SET is a focus area – but increased success in <i>all</i> qualifications should be part of the institutional plan. • There must be a separate plan for M & D students – we need to increase quality, success and throughput as a priority • Review professional qualifications especially PG coursework qualifications – students don’t complete because of the research component of the qualification. • Review qualifications to ensure social relevance – so that graduates can contribute to the domestic growth and development	
3	The greater implementation of work integrated learning in the curriculum and a very strong focus on skills development (with the move away from concentrating on HE to a wider emphasis on the PSET sector	• Unisa currently experiences difficulties implementing WIL (and the scale of WIL currently is quite limited) • We must be cautious not to take on more than we can actually effectively implement. • The emphasis on skills development, whilst democratising also makes the WP intellectually limited. •	
4	There is a very strong suggestion of	• Differentiation should not be used to instil fear – if	

	institutional 'differentiation'. The effect of this may be that institutions will have to offer a more defined, limited range of programmes.	Unisa embraces diversity and differentiation, it can actually grow stronger (use the analogy of biodiversity) • This will mean a possible further rationalisation of the PQM • Differentiated institutions may limit institutional autonomy • This may create the opportunity for Unisa to introduce the concept 'niche offering' rather than trying to offer 'everything for everyone' • Unisa should use the opportunity to build flagship programmes for which we will be the institution of first choice • As a comprehensive University, Unisa must guard against mission drift (which seems to be an imminent concern) and focus on strengthening the provision of diploma qualifications. This will come with attendant ramifications for example, currently Unisa has a low success rate at Diploma level – we need to assess whether we're applying the appropriate pedagogy to support the Diploma students. • Differentiation may lead us back to the 'ivy league' Universities • If differentiation pigeon-holes Unisa, it may also have the unintended consequence of limiting articulation – this must be avoided and the articulation plans need to take cognisance of the broader environment • A differentiated system will cause us to place our students appropriately given the tight enrolment plan	
5	There is no reference to the emerging privatisation/ commercialisation of HE (which is becoming a global trend)	• The commercialisation of HE should be engaged juxtaposed against the critical issues of quality and what it will mean for us	
6	There is a clearly envisaged	• There is too much of a focus on 'employer' needs	

	relationship linking the PSET sector and employment/employers	• There is an uncritical link between PSET and employment • Unisa must pursue new and worthy relationships with employers to identify what is considered 'relevant' by the sector. Programmes should be developed in consultation with employers as this will make the qualification more marketable and also make our graduates 'sought after' – this will be a win-win situation. • Unisa must work with the SETAs and business to create to create sectoral forums that will employ and educate the NEETS – this activity could be easily aligned to the CE imperatives • Partnerships with employers and stakeholder industries must be enhanced – it can increase research opportunities and CE initiatives – and very important, open doors for student placement and employment. • Employers also give good input into curriculum development, especially in the professional qualifications and keep us relevant. • Relationship between colleges and employers gives the colleges a competitive edge – students will be attracted to the college because of the possibility of later employment through the partnerships	
7	Focus on establishing partnerships and collaborations	• Collaboration is critical – globally, domestically, within the University, across Colleges, with students and all stakeholders • This will have positive spin-offs as we focus more cogently on linkages between HEIs – very positive for research initiatives. • Partnerships facilitate national and global sharing of expertise • Focus attention on partnerships with TVETS using past	

		experience as a platform from which to succeed – this should be a planned initiative and not ad hoc – consider areas where to focus • The co-operation with TVETs and Community Colleges can create self-funding opportunities and partnerships • Unisa should use the partnership commitment to strengthen capacity in the vocational qualifications. In teaching and nursing for example, it's easier to include graduate service: however, Unisa could also consider graduate service in other areas at the TVET Colleges – this is a novel approach but will serve a great purpose. • Staff exchanges between Unisa and TVET Colleges should be explored, rather than always focussing on the international linkages. • Partnerships and internationalisation is not just about bringing academics and researchers to Unisa – we need to also look at how our students can benefit from the internationalisation initiatives and facilitate their engagement with their international peers • Relationships with community colleges can be built on the platform of existing SLPs – we can share our knowledge and their space to offer the SLPs • Unisa will not be able to afford to extend its infrastructure on its own – collaborations with other partners and Universities and the Colleges will need to be established and Unisa will have to support these activities, as well. It will all require financial support. • Unisa must develop an integrated plan for partnerships and collaborations (including internationalisation) to avoid the problem of many engagements/relationships with no real return. Unisa must decide how to take internationalisation forward and the Colleges and Directorates must fit in with the institutional strategy	
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8	Training must lead to a qualification	• Where Unisa partners with community colleges to offer SLPs, it must also look at how the various SLPs – in combination – may lead to a qualification • It should be clear that graduation does not equate with employment • Universities must not be viewed as factories to produce ready-made labourers – Universities are also formations of knowledge production for general social advancement	
9	There appears to be a shift towards ' independence of learning and learner autonomy '	• Unisa has some highly structured modules (such as the signature courses) and programmes. We need to assess whether there is room for more than 1 model and how it will pertain at Unisa.	
10	There must be a clear position status on our current "value contribution" (i.e. content of study material) <i>versus</i> the drive towards OERs – will/should Unisa follow the route of OERs?	• The OER environment will gradually erode our competitive edge (which is based on quality study materials)	
11	Define what ' open learning ' means for Unisa	• Unisa uses the term quite loosely and we need a clear definition against the direction set in the WP (e.g. including the values of quality and funding) • Open learning will only be achieved through the use of diverse technology	
12	Learning support centres must be properly capacitated to effectively support students in ODL	• There is an increasing emphasis on the need for mediated learning to support the course material that is given to students. • As we go digital, we will have to provide access points for students through a variety of means – this will need to be carefully planned for cost-benefit	
13	Quality is ubiquitous spanning all areas of provision	• Plan to improve teaching and learning • Plan to improve assessment practices • Plan to improve systems	

		• Review course design • The role of the quality councils adds a further dimension to centralisation - that is evident in the WP – and limits the autonomy of HEIs • Quality must be looked at together with the commitments to articulation opportunities • There's a perception that the reference to quality is too glib – there's emphasis on gaining knowledge in disciplines but very little reference to ethics, good governance and greater social transformation. The latter issues are very relevant given where we come from as a country.	
14	The dependence on state funding will not serve the essential institutional needs	• Unisa must have a clear and dedicated plan to improve its income generation opportunities • The truncated system of TVET and community colleges reduces the role of Universities – with the greater focus on Community and TVET Colleges, there is a reasonable anticipation that funds will also be diverted to the College sector to get them up and running.	
15	The clear direction is that there will be a central application system	• This will require changes in current processes and systems – Unisa should be proactive in putting in place necessary platforms • A centralised system will limit institutional autonomy to decide which students to accept	
16	Articulation within the PSET sector must be open, agile and flexible	• Review the system of credits and exemptions between qualifications within the University, looking at both vertical and diagonal articulation • Review RPL Policy and practices to facilitate articulation and access • Articulation routes between Universities must be simplified and facilitated • Articulation routes between all the PSET providers and Unisa must be clearly planned for implementation	

17	With the opening of DE to all HEs, is there also the possibility that Unisa may consider contact tuition	• This is a great opportunity and frees Unisa to explore contact teaching and research • It will be particularly apposite in the professional disciplines	
18	There is a strong focus on the use of technology to support teaching and learning	• Institutional roll-out of ICT initiatives must be planned – they can't be ad hoc • Unisa must use its knowledge of the problems in this area to its advantage • Unisa needs to be clear about where it wants to go with regard to technology and there should be sufficient agility to accommodate staff and student levels of readiness • Unisa must set the platform for equitable access to appropriate technologies (and 'appropriate' must be consulted with all the relevant stakeholders). • The issues of connectivity must be resolved if we want to bridge the digital divide – we need to increase students' access to technology before we can talk about a successful model of teaching and learning • To achieve purpose, Unisa will need a robust infrastructure and improved ICT support • Relevant business applications and tools must be identified, sourced, and implemented. We need to be aware of the emerging technologies that will enable us to meet business requirements and be at the cutting edge • Technology comes with the concomitant demand to step-up security activities and protect data – Unisa is a critical data storer and POPI will become more relevant to us • Whilst bandwidth may become cheaper, the skills to support the new technologies are becoming more expensive	

		• Government support is a critical success factor • There's a trend towards consumerisation – we need a strategy that helps us avoid a 'free for all'	
19	There is a wide open space for private providers to enter the PSET space with concomitant competitive challenges		
20	There is a call to re-focus attention on the knowledge that resorts within the ageing cohort of academics and perhaps re-consider the retention of 'older' academics to harness the existing skills	• The failure to attract a young cadre academics is a serious fault - we should be devising ways to retain skills and incubate new cultures of scholarship – the talent management initiatives must come under scrutiny with less reliance on the skills of the ageing cohort of academics • There is no good argument for the bringing back of <i>emeriti</i> for purposes of mentorship. Current employees must perform this role and by the time they retire, they should have set the necessary platforms for the new staff to continue working effectively. There's no need to bring them back to do what they should have done in the first instance!	
21	All three pillars of scholarship – teaching and learning, research, and community engagement – are given equal emphasis	• We must look at how we <u>integrate</u> the 3 pillars of scholarship – this should be a key driver of all academic initiatives • There is currently a tension between teaching and learning on the one hand and research on the other – Unisa academics need to be guided to find a happy medium that adequately focuses on both activities	
22	All Universities are expected to be research active	• The new research focus – looking towards shared growth and development - must be acknowledged • At least some of our research should be focussed on the national objectives • We need to think about relevant priority areas and guide our research and in that direction	

		• Research publications must be good, quality outputs • WP regards patents and product innovation as important to help the country • As we grow R & I, it's not just about more patents (notwithstanding the point in the WP that requires a specific focus on patents): rather, we should increase the quality of research and the need to research to make an impact. All research is important but we need to be clear that we are making an impact in our disciplines. • Unisa must research the college and PSET sector and become the leader in this area – we can then begin to provide benchmarks and expert opinions 2/3 years from now • Universities can expect assistance from DHET – WP commits to building research capacities at Universities • Academic partnerships must be focussed and enhanced to promote research activities • Staffing must be improved to ensure better research capacities • A concern for consideration: when we place doctoral dissertations on the internet, we place it in the public domain – but this constrains the individual's IP rights and possible 3rd stream income derived from payments for our knowledge dissemination	
23	Community engagement is emphasised throughout the WP	• The distinction between CE and graduate community service must clarified because the WP is confused in its use of the terms. It links CE to teaching and learning but GCS refers to how young people can become involved in communities – surely there is a natural overlap between the two. • CE is not always a handout to indigent societies but	

		applies wherever such a partnership may be found • SLPs must be reconsidered in light of a bigger CE Plan. SLPs should not just be about 3rd-stream income or alternate private resources: rather SLPs should be conceptualised as opportunities to serve communities, which is a key value in a developmental state • There is a need to look at how CE initiatives are funded. It is clear that CE will not be funded by HE except where it is linked to an academic programme/ research initiative: however, GCS will be funded because it is seen as a community benefit. • Unisa is well-ahead of the White Paper regarding CE activities – we do not have ad hoc initiatives – and we should capitalise on our current platform	
24	There is a clear focus on the value of blended learning as the intersection between face-to-face teaching and e-learning	• This is not just about technology – blended learning is about new technologies and new pedagogies, and new modes of delivery. Unisa can be at the centre of this revolution but we need to have a clear common understanding of what this means for Unisa and not just individual staff members and plan accordingly for the future.	
25	Unisa must consider its current Short Learning Programme project	• SLPs can be developed to support the community colleges and establish partnerships • SLPs should be focused on CE initiatives • There is a critical need for training and re-training and SLPs will serve that role. Unisa must decide what percentage of its capacity to focus on formal programmes and SLPs respectively • The SLPs however need to be structured with a long term plan so that people who take SLPs can eventually articulate into the formal programme and derive credit for work done	
26	Students with disabilities must	• Unisa must do a baseline assessment of the 'as is'	

	be prioritised for attention	picture and begin to work from there. • Unisa should have a specific placement programme to assist students with disabilities • Disability management is not just about facilities and infrastructure – we should also be doing research on disability and students with disabilities	
27	WP refers to the demise of African languages	• African languages were never on the radar – for as long as memory serves government has been concerned about enrolments in African languages • African languages are important as a discipline: however, we need to re-centre the African languages as a medium of instruction and learning	
	There is no synergy between the aspirations of the WP and the state of basic education	• PSET is expected to put in place initiatives to address the shortcomings of Basic Education	
	PSET sector is a very complex sector – too complex for the centralised approach envisaged in the WP		
	The WP does not appear to encourage thinking – the PSET sector <i>must</i> be geared to producing thinkers if it wants to transform society		