FIVE YEAR REVIEW
OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
2015 - 2019
December 2019

University of the Witwatersrand
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WITS 2050
South Africa
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CHAPTER
Universities have the ability to shape society in multiple ways: through the creation of new knowledge, the development of high-level professional skills to uplift the economy, and the graduation of active citizens who lead change in society and advance the public good.

This holistic approach has been adopted by the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), renowned for its academic excellence, high standard of education, inclusivity and commitment to diversity – of people, disciplines and ideas.

Wits is an institution that is locally embedded, nationally responsive and globally competitive. These characteristics are reflected in its teaching and learning plans, which have been continually redeveloped over the last decade to adapt to a changing society. While this review reflects comprehensively on the 2015 – 2019 Teaching and Learning Plan, it is important to reflect briefly on the past in order to understand the context in which this plan was developed and, more importantly, to look ahead at how future plans can meet the challenges of the 21st Century, some of which are still unknown.

Enabling access in a changing higher education system

The higher education landscape in South Africa has transformed dramatically over the last 25 years, with greater access for students from all demographic groups being a core focus for the state and higher education institutions alike. In the early 2000s, the sector was reconfigured through a series of mergers and the establishment of a differentiated higher education system, which today comprises research-intensive universities such as Wits, comprehensive universities and universities of technology. Two new universities were established in the last decade, bringing the number of public universities to 26. An emphasis on revitalising quality Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, which was a critical gap in post-secondary education, has also emerged in recent years.

While Wits enjoys a long history of opposing apartheid and enabling access to education, the number of students enrolled at the University has grown steeply in the past 19 years, increasing by almost 50% from just under 20 000 in 2000 to just over 29 000 in 2009. The thrust of the 2009 - 2013 Teaching and Learning Plan, linked closely to the University’s enrolment plan, thus centred on facilitating access to higher education for students from all backgrounds, and transforming the student body in terms of race and gender to broadly reflect the demographics of South Africa. These targets were largely achieved and in 2019 Wits enrolled about 38 000 students, of which over a third are
postgraduate and half are women. More than 50% of Wits’s students are enrolled in the science, engineering and technology fields.

Developing a talent pipeline

The University also established a talent pipeline through the Targeting Talent Programme (TTP). The TTP, in its 13th year of implementation in 2019, is a pre-university enrichment programme that aims to increase the academic, social and psychological preparation of learners from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds for admission to South African universities. Academically talented learners from Grades 10 and 11 are selected from various schools across South Africa to attend the programme until their final, Grade 12, year in school. In addition, the Wits Student Equity and Talent Management Unit provides an enrichment programme to maths and science educators from schools that participate in the TTP, which deepens their subject-specific, pedagogical and curriculum-specific knowledge. The programme also assists in the creation of professional learning communities among teachers, which supports their ongoing professional development.

Five years ago, fewer than 20% of Wits students were the first in their families to attend a university. Today, this applies to almost 48% of first-year entering students. Attending university empowers them with the skills and opportunities to transform their own lives, their family circumstances and their communities. The increase in first-generation students also addresses two major issues facing society – unemployment and inequality. Wits graduates are sought after in the workplace, with the Graduate Exit Survey of 2018 showing 97% of those employed found work within six months of graduating.

Ensuring access with success

The emphasis of the 2014–2019 Teaching and Learning Plan is on enabling access with success, which started with a commitment from Wits management and academics to work proactively with students to ensure they are given the appropriate support and personal attention to facilitate their success.

A comprehensive approach to student success has been adopted, which includes the establishment of academic development and student support units in all faculties. Qualified staff members based in these units, supported by sophisticated data tracking and analysis tools, play a critical role in the early identification of students who are academically at risk, and particularly those in their first year of study. This allows for proactive intervention by the respective Faculty to address the specific challenges experienced by the students (many of which are linked to external environmental factors).

A grant from the Kresge Foundation has also assisted significantly in establishing the human resources capacity required to use data analytics as an additional tool to promote student success. This approach has helped increase the throughput rates, and a record number of students graduated in the last two years. However, in terms of
student success, a distinct anomaly can be detected in students’ success rates in 2016 and 2017, which can largely be attributed to the impact of the #FeesMustFall student protests.

Impact of #FeesMustFall on student success rates

At the end of 2014, students at several universities began calling for transformation of the higher education sector, for the reformation and decolonisation of curricula and for the creation of a learning environment in which all students felt at home. The #RhodesMustFall movement started at the University of Cape Town and momentum grew across the sector in 2015.

The escalating cost of higher education (at least two percent above that of inflation), the dramatic upsurge in student numbers and the decline in state funding and subsidies to universities (per capita) resulted in tremendous pressure being placed on higher education institutions, and research-intensive universities in particular. This resulted in universities, including Wits, proposing double-digit fee increases. This sparked student protests countrywide. The focus of the protests shifted from calls for decolonisation to a call for free education in 2016. Wits was at the epicentre of the protests that swept across the country. The #FeesMustFall protests resulted in a significant disruption of the higher education system, and while Wits did not technically lose many teaching days, the national mood impacted adversely on the well-being of the Wits community and beyond, and influenced the academic performance of some students.

At the end of 2016, the then president of South Africa announced a fee-free dispensation for students from families whose household income was R350 000 or less. About a fifth of the Wits student body now qualifies for funding from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), but this does not address the issues of students who fall into the “missing middle” category – those who do not qualify for NSFAS but are also not wealthy enough to pay their own way. Students in the “missing middle” make up the majority of students at Wits. On average, about 25 000 of Wits’s 38 000 students enjoy some form of scholarship, grant or bursary, with the University administering over R1-billion in student funding annually.

From an academic perspective, the statistics demonstrate that just as student success and throughput rates were rising, they were negatively affected by the protests, with success rates declining in 2016 and 2017, and first-year students being impacted the most. The throughput rates have subsequently increased, with over 9 000 students graduating in 2018, a record for Wits.

Student support

The University has dedicated additional resources to strengthen the health and well-being of students post #FeesMustFall, and to address their psychosocial needs. To this end, a comprehensive mental health programme has been developed, additional counsel-
lors and healthcare professionals have been appointed and a 24-hour hotline has been established for students.

Educate the educator

The Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development (CLTD) has been restructured in the last five years with the objective of supporting academics in their teaching role, introducing new pedagogies and facilitating student learning. The CLTD offers a comprehensive suite of continuous professional development workshops (in contact and online modes) each year, some in collaboration with the Research Office.

The School of Education, together with the CLTD, offers a Postgraduate Diploma in Education in the field of Higher Education for academics. A second qualification to enable academics to become proficient in integrating educational technologies into their teaching is under development. Forty-six academics have obtained these diplomas in the last three years, with another 14 on track to graduate at the end of 2019, and the impact of these talented, qualified individuals is now evident in their faculties. Wits also offers a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Science Education, which has been in existence for seven years.

Transforming curricula and enabling access

In response to calls for decolonising the curriculum and as part of the University’s regular review of academic programmes, a detailed audit was undertaken in line with the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework. A comprehensive report detailing significant changes to several academic programmes was submitted to the Council on Higher Education.

In addition, there have been several significant curriculum initiatives. The introduction of a common first year in Engineering programmes is one of the outstanding examples. It makes it possible for students to change from one branch of Engineering to another after the first year of study, or to switch from Engineering to a Science programme. There has been a complete overhaul of the Architecture and Built Environment programmes, as well as significant transformation in programmes based in the Humanities and Health Sciences Faculties, including the introduction of a compulsory African language in some programmes. Access to Health Sciences programmes, particularly the medical degree, has been facilitated by the amendment of the entry requirements for the MBChB. While the emphasis is still on merit and excellence, factors such as rurality, school quintile and the background of the applicant are taken into account.

New language policy

As part of the University’s accelerated transformation programme, a new language policy has been adopted, which saw the inauguration of a Language Board to monitor
and ensure that the policy is implemented. The current implementation phase focuses on embedding language skills within everyday practices as well as in the curriculum to ensure that African languages are mainstreamed. For example, all students who enrol in the Bachelor of Arts programme are now required to learn an African language or South African Sign Language. Similar requirements are placed on students in the Engineering and Health Sciences Faculties to empower students to work in diverse environments in South Africa. The University has also embarked on a strategy to include isiZulu and SeSotho on all signage, stationery, banners and other material and is ensuring that all important documents are translated into the official languages adopted by the University. Several staff (academic, professional and support) have been upskilling themselves through the language courses offered through the Wits Language School.

Into the future

As a research-intensive university, Wits plans to have 45% of its student body comprising of postgraduate students by 2023. To this end, the University is aligning its enrolment plan with its next five-year teaching and learning plan to alter the size and composition of the student body over the next five years or so.

The proposed new Teaching and Learning Plan (2020-2024) will focus on producing graduates that are appropriately prepared to participate in the new digital economy and who can adapt to the new world of work. To this end, the plan includes curricula that have a strong digital component and that incorporate new multimodal educational technologies through contact teaching, online teaching and blended learning options. The plan anticipates that at least 10% of Wits programmes will be delivered online and that approximately 20-25% of courses will be offered in a blended mode. At present, 65% of programmes have some digital footprint, but the University is aiming to take this to 80% in the next five years.

In 2016, Wits became the first university in Africa to offer massive open online courses (MOOCs) on edX, an online learning platform established by Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Today, Wits offers 11 MOOCs on edX, with more being developed every year. In addition, new fully online programmes are awaiting accreditation and hundreds of short courses are being developed and offered.

Where students learn is just as important as what they learn and Wits students now experience innovative teaching and learning spaces on campus, new smart classrooms, e-zones, simulation laboratories, the Wits DigiMine and libraries for the 21st Century.

Professor Andrew Crouch
Vice-Principal and Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic
Wits University has a number of structures at both institutional and faculty levels that support and promote university teaching and student learning.

In addition to the Senate, which discusses and approves all academic matters, there is a sub-committee, the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee, that has the following remit:

The Teaching and Learning Committee focuses on ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the University for postgraduate and undergraduate students. This includes promoting teaching and learning practices that facilitate excellence and address educational disadvantages. Makes recommendations to Senate on appropriate learning prerequisites/qualifications for academic staff. Makes recommendations on issues of pedagogy, access, academic development, assessment, success rates and resources required for teaching and learning to the APDC (Academic Planning and Development Committee) and Senate. Receives written reports on teaching and learning activities in the faculties and makes appropriate recommendations. Receives reports from standing sub-committees such as the Vice-Chancellor’s Teaching Award and Team Teaching Award.

Two new sub-committees of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee have been established, the Student Success Steering Committee and the First Year Experience Committee.

In November 2017 the university-wide Student Success Steering Committee was formed as part of Wits’s participation in the Siyaphumelela project (see chapter 4), a project that the US-based Kresge Foundation funded for four years to promote data analytics in the service of student success. Wits is one of only five South African universities that was awarded the grant. The Student Success Committee meets twice a year to discuss both faculty-based and institution-wide efforts to promote student success, and identify areas in which student support is needed and opportunities for synergy among existing initiatives.

The second sub-committee is the First Year Experience Committee, formed in 2018 (see chapter 3). In common with universities nationally and internationally, Wits recognises that many students struggle to make the transition from a protected and, in South Africa’s case, quite authoritarian, high school context to university. Successfully navigating the change is the first step towards being a successful student.
Both sub-committees bring together representatives from each of the five faculties, professional and support staff from Student Affairs, Institutional Research and the Office of the Registrar, as well as student representatives. The Student Success Steering Committee is chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic, Professor Andrew Crouch. The First-Year Experience Committee is chaired by the Senior Director: Academic Affairs, Professor Diane Grayson. She was appointed in March 2018 in the newly created post designed to provide additional academic and operational capacity in the office of the DVC.

Faculty-level participation

During 2014 all faculties appointed Assistant Deans: Teaching and Learning. The assistant deans are respected academics who have a deep commitment to promoting university teaching and student learning. Assistant deans represent their faculties on the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee, where they report on relevant matters from their faculties and participate in discussions that inform institutional teaching and learning practices and policies. They also take matters of institutional importance back to their faculties, and chair Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees. Schools within faculties have their own Teaching and Learning Committees, which are, in turn, represented on the faculty committee. This tiered committee structure is intended to encourage widespread participation of staff and students at multiple levels in the institution in promoting good teaching and student learning.

Faculties have also appointed support staff to act as the first port of call for students who may be at risk of failing or dropping out (see chapter 5). Initially, these staff were called “at-risk coordinators”, but since 2018, and in line with international trends, they have been called student advisers.

Quality assurance

A number of structures and processes are in place to ensure that academic offerings – courses, curricula, programmes and short courses – are of high quality.

Wits employs experienced and well-qualified professional staff in the Quality and Academic Planning Office and the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development. They work with academic staff to ensure that courses and curricula are educationally well designed and technically correct in terms of the requirements of higher education regulatory bodies. In each faculty, either the Teaching and Learning Committee or another committee scrutinises all proposed new or revised academic offerings before they go before the faculty board. Faculty-approved academic offerings, as well as rule changes, are presented to the university-wide APDC, a sub-committee of Senate that has the authority to approve all academic offerings except for new programmes (those that require external accreditation).
New programmes are recommended by the APDC for approval by Senate. Proposals for short courses are discussed in detail by the Short Course Sub-Committee of the APDC, comprising representatives of each faculty and relevant professional and support staff. Given the nature of short courses, which are often developed in order to address the need for upskilling or to provide up-to-date knowledge for the working populace, short courses need to be revised and reapproved every five years. Certificates for completed short courses are printed by the Office of the Registrar, and are issued only for approved short courses.
First Year Experience Ambassadors during Orientation Week 2019

Image: Mxolisi Mdletshe

CHAPTER 3
3.1 A diversifying student body

The first year undergraduate (UG) student enrolment numbers have been fluctuating around 8 000 in the last 10 years with the lowest enrolment numbers recorded in 2011 at 7 356 and the highest numbers recorded in 2016 at 8 884 (Figure 1).

This first year enrolment pattern has been maintained despite the overall student enrolment figures at Wits increasing during the same period.

This has also taken place in a period where Wits is aiming to becoming an internationally leading research-intensive university in Africa. To achieve this objective, Wits is strategically reducing the undergraduate student numbers by 500 and increasing the postgraduate (PG) student numbers by 800 every year, to ensure a postgraduate student population of 45% by 2025.

In line with its Learning and Teaching Plan 2015-2019 which aims to broaden the participation of students from diverse backgrounds (rural, black, female, disabled and mature students), Wits has achieved the following highlights during that period:

• A gradual increase in the percentage of female first year UG students from 53% in 2016 to 57% in 2019 (Figure 2);

• Maintaining the average percentage of African students at 67%, followed by White (15%), Indian (13%) and Coloured (4%) students (Figure 3);

• A slight decrease in the percentage of first generation students, that is, those who are first in their families to study at a university. The highest percentage of first generation students was recorded in 2016 (48%) with the lowest percentage recorded in 2019 (43%) (Figure 4).

• More than half of the first year UG students were not taught in their home language in high school. The highest percentage was recorded in 2018 at 59% of the first year student population (Figure 5);

• Wits continues to attract most of its students from quintile 4 and 5 high schools at an average of 47% in the last four years. Quintile 1-3 schools constitute the second category of high schools that provide first-year students to Wits at an average of 31% in the last four years (Figure 6). (Quintile
1-3 = poor resourced schools; Quintile 4-5 = well-resourced schools; PVT/INT = private and/or international schools);

• A gradual increase in the last four years in the percentages of students who had used facilities such as computers, laboratories and libraries in high school. The use of computers increased from 64% in 2016 to 77% in 2019; use of laboratories increased from 67% in 2016 to 83% in 2019; and the use of libraries increased from 60% in 2016 to 85% in 2019 (Figure 7). These findings help indicate the level of preparedness of first-year students for university;

• A significant increase in the percentages of first-year UG students who are planning to stay at university residences. This percentage has increased from 18% in 2016 to 33% in 2019. At the same time, the percentage of students planning to stay at home during their studies decreased from 45% in 2016 to 36% in 2019 (Figure 8). These findings reflect the expectations of students where an increasing number of them expect the university to provide accommodation for them;

• A significant increase in the percentage of students relying on NSFAS for their tuition payment in the last four years. This percentage has increased from 14% in 2016 to 46% in 2019 (Figure 9). At the same time, the percentage of students relying on their parents for payment of their tuition has decreased from 56% in 2016 to 43% in 2019. These observations reflect the financial constraints facing the students and their families.
**Figure 2: Percentage distribution of students by gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Wits First-year Students’ Biographical Questionnaire*

**Figure 3: Percentage distribution of students by race**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>AFRICAN (%)</th>
<th>CHINESE (%)</th>
<th>COLOURED (%)</th>
<th>INDIAN (%)</th>
<th>WHITE (%)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Wits First-year Students’ Biographical Questionnaire*
Figure 4: Percentage distribution of students by first-generation status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>First-generation</th>
<th>Non-first generation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wits First-year Students’ Biographical Questionnaire

Figure 5: Distribution of students by language of instruction. They were asked: was your home language the language of instruction?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
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Source: Wits First-year Students’ Biographical Questionnaire
Figure 6: Percentage distribution of students by high school quintile categories (2016-2019)

Source: Wits First-year Students' Biographical Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVT/INT</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>23%</td>
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</table>

Figure 7: Percentage distribution of students by facility use in high school

Source: Wits First-year Students' Biographical Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computers</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 8: Percentage distribution of students by accommodation plans (2016-2019)

Source: Wits First-year Students’ Biographical Questionnaire

Figure 9: Percentage distribution of students by top three contributors of their tuition

Source: Wits First-year Students’ Biographical Questionnaire
3.2 Transitioning into Wits student life

It’s party time, or is it?

Orientation Week or O-Week has traditionally been this “come and party and just have a good time”, says the Dean of Student Affairs, Jerome September.

Despite the promise of fun, the word out there was that O-Week was easily skipped, he says. This view is not unique to Wits; Freshers’ Week (as it is often known) is regarded as a waste of time in many countries. And yet, done well, research has shown that it can be a high-impact practice that contributes to student success.

Now, Wits O-Week has been reconceptualised and revamped, and the effort is paying off. Like most about-turns, it is based on a multitude of factors, including September’s arrival at Wits in 2018 and his own experiences not only in student affairs management but also as a student orientation leader and trainer. The changes are also influenced by the input of the new Senior Director of Academic Affairs, Prof. Diane Grayson; the creation in 2018 of the First Year Experience subcommittee of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee; input from the likes of Nicole Morris and Mpho Thahale of the Development and Leadership Unit, and student surveys.

“Last year coming into this year we’ve done quite a bit of thinking regarding the purpose of orientation week and how faculties take bigger ownership. We also had a conversation with residences because that’s where some of the challenge sits. We then conceptualised Orientation Week as being almost the entry point into the First Year Experience programme, which is a year-long programme dedicated to empowering first-year students and, of course, setting them up for success,” says September.

Why all this fuss and bother about the week before lectures even start?

September explains: “Orientation Week is important because it lays the foundation towards academic success. It is the week that introduces you to the key services, it is the week where the baseline expectation, at least academically, is explained, it is the week where the deans come in, where the faculty gives you a sense of what the course is about, your lab sessions for the year or at least the next six months become known, you’re shown where your classes will be, you’re shown where the library is, how to use the library – so it’s an incredibly important week.

“And of course on the social side it’s where you are able to make friends and connect with people in the same class.

“It lays the foundation for future success and, in our case, computer literacy tests are in that period, which give an indication as to what additional classes you might need.”

These computer assessments are integral to Orientation Week. Each student is tested and Thahale, Student Development Practitioner at the Development and Learning Unit,
works with facilitators to upgrade skills. On average 350 students attend the computer skills sessions that are run on a Saturday morning.

“What we found, especially this year,” says September, “is that young people are smartphone savvy; they’re not necessarily computer savvy. Academically, they cannot use Microsoft Word, in some instances they don’t even know where to switch on the computer. They don’t know what the mouse is. So the First Year Experience programme aims to bridge that gap.”

A look at the 2019 O-Week activities, listed on Z-cards in each faculty’s specific colour, shows it included talks on plagiarism, the ABCs of success, responsible learning, and academic success through leadership and service.

It also included performances by Drama for Life, a course based on using drama as a tool for learning life lessons. “Drama for Life is able to teach in a very impactful manner without students feeling that they are being taught,” says Nicole Morris, Manager of the Development and Leadership Unit.

The play introduces the students to Braamfontein, the area in which Wits is located, the University, its faculties and academic support programmes, as well as its support services for mental health, healthy living, arts and culture and responsible choices.

September says the SRC came to the party in more ways than one. “They also rethought their own orientation programme, which is usually party after party after party. They agreed that for the first three nights they wouldn’t do alcohol-based events, so they did a jazz, poetry, spoken word evening, the second one was a comedy night and then the alcohol ones from the Thursday night.

“It was a wonderful relaxed synergy with the rest of the university around rethinking because usually they would have had a beer garden running the whole week.

“This O-Week was definitely better attended. Where we struggled was still with the residences because traditionally they ran their own thing on the premise ‘We, our res, will give the best programme ever’. Which is fine if it’s done after hours, but the problem is it’s also during the day, which means those students often miss out on the faculty programmes.”

Orientation Week is assisted by First Year Experience (FYE) Ambassadors, senior students who are trained by a number of support units (including the University Transformation Office, Gender Equity Office, the Development and Leadership Unit and the Counseling Careers and Development Unit) in skills such as social etiquette. In 2018 100 were trained, and in 2019, 480.

In order to further support first-year students, and recognising that there is too much information to take in during one week, the Development and Leadership Unit produced the comprehensive 70-page “Wits Student Guide 2019”, full of useful information about
activities in and around campus and how to access support. FYE Ambassadors handed out the guide on the first day of lectures. It is also on the Wits website.

In 2019, additional support was provided in the form of mentors, an upgrade on the peer buddies of the past. All first-year students were asked if they wanted a senior student to support them and 1252 did. The various support units in the University trained 207 mentors. The mentors serve as FYE Ambassadors post the orientation week programme.

Morris says the First Year Experience has been “deliberately and intentionally designed to help students transition from high school to university and we placed a big focus this year on creating a home away from home. If you stay on campus, or you don’t, the idea is that when you are on this campus, it feels like home.

“So if you’re not sure and you need help, open your (student guide) book. If your book doesn’t help you, you must walk to the First Year Experience office, it must help you.

“If that doesn’t help you, you must call on your mentor – whom Thahale manages – and your mentor must help you.

“There are monthly check-in sessions with the mentors to find out how our first years are, how are they feeling, what are their needs, and then we do interventions,” she says.

The First Year Experience programme focuses on helping students adjust to university life.

“So there will be workshops around adjusting to university life, there will be workshops around how to handle stress, and things around time management,” says September.

“There is a module on critical thinking and modules to help set you up for success over the year. So when you come back for the second semester, the first couple of sessions will be about how to deal with failure because it might be the first time in your life that you’ve actually failed an exam.

“It is a holding of the first year’s hand, it is a helping to ease them into the university system so by the time they enter the second year, where there’s really meant to be more independence, they have been given the basics,” says September.

Next up is the creation of a Centre for Student Development, which will bring Orientation Week and the First Year Experience together with citizenship and community. “We are setting the student up for success in creating pathways to graduation. So when you come in, and you are a Law student, and you are interested potentially in issues of social justice, there’s a pathway of programmes that you can follow in the First Year Experience,” says September.
The University of The Witwatersrand (Wits University), prides itself in being a leading University that produces global leaders and change makers. This is not possible without fostering relationships with our students and their families. First year can be a difficult time for many students, and parents/guardians can assist in making this transition effortless.

We welcome you and your student to the Wits University family and look forward to walking this academic journey together.

### Tips for Parents & Guardians

#### Activity
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>7-31 January</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<td>28 January-1 February</td>
<td>Orientation</td>
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<td>4-20 March</td>
<td>Block 1</td>
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<td>1-17 May</td>
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<td>27 May-24 June</td>
<td>Examinations</td>
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<td>15 July-30 August</td>
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<td>9 September-22 October</td>
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<td>28 October-22 November</td>
<td>Examinations</td>
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### Important Contact Numbers

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<th>Division/Unit</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wits Switchboard</td>
<td>(011) 717 1000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campus Health</td>
<td>(011) 717 9111</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs and Societies</td>
<td>(011) 717 9206</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counselling &amp; Careers Development Unit (CCDU)</td>
<td>(011) 717 9140 / 32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disability Rights Unit</td>
<td>(011) 717 9151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty: Commerce, Law &amp; Management</td>
<td>(011) 717 8007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty: Engineering &amp; Built Environment</td>
<td>(011) 717 7007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty: Health Sciences</td>
<td>(011) 717 2061 / 2040</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty: Humanities</td>
<td>(011) 717 4008 / 3018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty: Sciences</td>
<td>(011) 717 6014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fees Office</td>
<td>(011) 717 1531</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Aid &amp; Scholarships Office</td>
<td>(011) 717 1081 / 75 / 34</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Students Office</td>
<td>(011) 717 1054</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parking Office</td>
<td>(011) 717 1881 / 2 / 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protection Services</td>
<td>(011) 717 4444 / 6666 / 2222 / 3340 / 3589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residence Life</td>
<td>(011) 717 9172 / 73 / 74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Enquiries (excluding Admission Enquiries)</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Enquiries.studentaffairs@wits.ac.za">Enquiries.studentaffairs@wits.ac.za</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Enrolment Centre</td>
<td>(011) 717 1888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wits Integrity Hotline</td>
<td>082 938 4559 / 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wits Plus - Part-time Studies</td>
<td>(011) 717 9505 / 9500 / 9501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wits Sports</td>
<td>(011) 717 9409</td>
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### The Division of Student Affairs

The Division of Student Affairs is a specialized co-curricular department within the University whose mandate is to support the core academic project. The Division is overseen by the Dean of Student Affairs, and consists of the following departments:

- Campus Health and Wellness
- Campus Housing and Residence Life
- Counselling and Careers Development Unit
- Development and Leadership Unit
- Student Governance
- Wits Sport
- Wits Citizenship and Community Outreach

Although not part of the lecture hall experience, Student Affairs’ desire is to support the students academic journey, by providing additional services that will ensure their well being is taken care of. Students with aspirations to make their Wits journey an exciting and fulfilling one, then Student Affairs is the perfect partner to make this a reality.

### University Information

The University communicates primarily to the student, through their student email. Please urge your student to check this email regularly.

For any additional information, parents and guardians are urged to utilise the University website that is a source of useful and vital information.

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**SOURCE:** Welcome Day 2019 leaflet
sessions especially the master class which featured motivation in the form of the youngest PhD graduate who had a similar story to mine of having no funding at the beginning of her studies. I ENJOYED ALL THE LEARNING “The address from the Deans and the Madam President Sisanda (SRC president Sisanda Mbolekwa) made me feel very welcome here at Wits and made me realise that I am not as alone as people always said I will be once I get to tertiary. They made me REALISE that there are people who are there for me should I ever feel like I’m not coping.”

I literally had no fear because I got used to the environment and I also happened to make friends with many people. After attending O-week I feel so delighted because I managed to see how the university operates. The Wits staff really demonstrated uncommon zeal. I FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE, I felt so delighted because I learnt so many things that I did not know previously and now I feel like I am so ready for varsity life. I learnt not only academic stuff but I also learnt about life as a whole. The O-week lessons taught me so much ... even about myself. It was an extremely interactive week ... WELL planned and thoughtful. The learning SESSIONS were very informative and gave us an idea of how university life will be and how to navigate around it. They also reassured us that we are not alone in this journey towards obtaining our degrees and that we can receive help any time we require it.

Source: Orientation Week Survey Report 2019
First Year Experience Mentorship

207 mentors | 1,252 mentees

Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management
44 mentors

Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment
27 mentors
Faculty of Humanities
64 mentors

Faculty of Health Sciences
19 mentors

Faculty of Science
53 mentors
CHAPTER 4

Kevin McLoughlin, Innocent Mamvura, Takalani Muloiwa and Mxolisi Masango of Wits Business Intelligence Services

Image: Humbelani Wisdom Masithiwa
4.1 Siyaphumelela Project - Making sure we are all succeeding

Wits is one of only five South African universities selected to receive a grant from the Kresge Foundation in the US towards improving student success through improved data analysis.

Siyaphumelela (isiXhosa for “we succeed”) is the foundation’s only programme of this kind outside the US. The aim is to promote “access and success for low-income, first-generation and under-represented students” in higher education in South Africa. Ultimately, the foundation believes that increasing the number of university graduates is “one of the best ways to enhance democracy and promote economic growth and global competitiveness”.

The foundation was established in 1924 by entrepreneur Sebastian Kresge with a mission “to promote human progress”. With a $3.8-billion endowment, it does this in the fields of arts and culture, environment, education, health, human services, community development, and has also embraced the city of Detroit as a distinct programme.

In 2014 South African universities were invited to submit proposals to take part in Kresge’s Siyaphumelela programme. The foundation pointed out in its call for proposals that while access to university has improved, as evidenced in the “much more diverse” campuses, student success has lagged behind: “At best, black persistence and graduation rates are no better than under apartheid and, in many cases, graduation rates appear to have fallen”.

However, low graduation rates, “especially among previously disadvantaged, first-generation and low-income students” are also a US phenomenon. And “robust data collection and analysis” has helped by providing the evidence to make decisions.

Georgia State University in Atlanta, for one, has done this to overcome race-based differences in student outcomes, and the Siyaphumelela Project aims to use this type of experience to do the same in South Africa.

Wits’s proposal won the day, alongside those of the universities of Pretoria, Free State and Nelson Mandela. The Durban University of Technology was added from 2016.

This is not Wits’s first involvement with the foundation. Since 2005, Kresge has invested
more than $26.7 million in South African higher education and between 2006 and 2010 Wits was a beneficiary of a Kresge Special Initiative, which helped it increase its private fundraising revenue threefold. It then joined the Kresge Leader University Initiative and received an additional $250 000 between 2012 and 2016 to continue developing its advancement.

The Siyaphumelela project, initially planned to run for four years and now extended until the end of 2019, represents an annual grant of $100 000 to each selected university.

But Kresge has provided far more than just money, it has provided support in terms of guiding the process, providing training and helping capacity development.

This type of support has transformed the way Wits bolsters student success. In its Siyaphumelela Progress Report, for the period January 2018 – February 2019, Wits rated itself five out of five on three programme objectives, for embedding the practice across the institution:

- Developing annual goals for improving student success;
- Reducing student outcomes differences based on race, gender, class and first-generation status, while maintaining quality; and
- The University’s own priority objective of understanding university readiness among undergraduates.

It rated itself four, which means the implementation is 100% completed, for these objectives:

- Establish a broadly representative student success committee;
- Develop sustained capacity to implement and manage a data chain (collect, collate, analyse and use both historical and real-time data);
- Use data analytics to review the top 10 courses/modules in which students fail, withdraw, or receive otherwise unsatisfactory grades;
- Strengthen and integrate data analytics across multiple departments; and
- The University’s other own priority objective of establishing an integrated data management system on student support programmes.

The objective in which Wits rated itself a three – for substantial elements of a project having been nearly or fully completed – was the scaling up of student success efforts, responding to problems identified through data analytics across the institution, and sharing good practice nationally.

Overall, in assessing factors that were still being worked on, Wits cited the high workload of the Institutional Research Unit and the culture of working in silos.

The factors that helped it achieve its objectives included the appointment of Professor Diane Grayson to Wits for her focus on “consolidation and improvement of the processes that have a direct impact on the student journey”; the input of Siyaphumela’s American data coach, Jan Lyddon, to keep the project focused; the active involvement of
internal stakeholders such as the “committed Siyaphumelela project team”; and the support from Vice-Chancellor Adam Habib and Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic Professor Andrew Crouch. It had also helped that most of the student support initiatives were already developed and needed only to be scaled up and integrated.

Wits was well represented at the Siyaphumelela 2019 Conference held in Johannesburg in June. This included Prof. Crouch on a panel about realising the vision of student success, Prof. Grayson presenting a paper about an institutional framework for student success, and Nicole Morris, Manager of the Development and Leadership Unit, and Takalani Muloiwa, institutional researcher and business intelligence analyst, presenting a paper on orientation for student success. Mxolisi Masango, Head of the Analytics and Institutional Research Unit and project leader of Siyaphumelela at Wits, presented a paper on an evaluation of Wits’s faculty-based student support initiatives.

4.2 Biographical Questionnaire development and increased response rate – The power of information

As part of the Siyaphumelela initiative, Wits has created a Biographical Questionnaire (BQ) that all first-time, first-year undergraduate students fill in after registration.

Two things about this questionnaire are extraordinary: how something that takes just five to 15 minutes to complete can have such a major impact on predicting, helping and understanding student success right until graduation; and how adding a questionnaire to registration can be so fraught with problems that take years to overcome.

One misconception about this questionnaire is that providing the required information could prevent someone being accepted for their chosen course of study.

But students are first accepted for a course, register later, and only then fill in the ques-
This included Prof Crouch's questionnaires so it cannot have any impact on their admission to the University. The questionnaires will, in fact, help their progress through university as it helps Wits work out their needs and how the institution can help them do better.

Mxolisi Masango, says the idea of a questionnaire came from Georgia State University in the US, which is “big in collecting student information which they convert into insights they can act on. The US is leading on student success and part of that is collecting the student information.”

He says the variables help. “As soon as they come into the university we know 50% of our students are first in their family to attend university, so they don’t have any idea of what university is all about.”

In fact, the 2019 BQ shows that 43% of the first-years are first-generation students. This is a decrease from the 47% of 2018.

Other questions in the BQ relate to the facilities they had at their high school such as electricity and a library (access to computers fared the lowest here); who pays their tuition fees; and where their home is located, and what facilities it has, such as electricity, running water and a private place to study. The questionnaire asks where they intend staying while at university and then, if relevant, what transport they will use to get to campus and how long it will take them to travel there daily (See Chapter 3.1).

Over the years the questions have changed a little. Muloiwa, an institutional researcher at the unit Masango heads and who has played a key role in ensuring the success of the BQ, says they initially asked what proportion of students’ fees was being paid by their parents or a bursary, but soon realised that some didn’t know the answer. Now students need say only if a parent/guardian or NSFAS or a bursary is paying.

The Science Faculty requested a question on whether their degree was a student’s first choice of study and that became an additional question in 2019.

“There are only two open-ended questions. One is ‘what are your fears regarding your first year of university?’ and the other one is the occupation of your parent or guardian,” says Muloiwa.

Other than the fears, the requested information is basic and does not require much thought. Yet the process of getting the questions answered has taken years to master, and not only on a technological level.

2015, the first year of the Siyaphumelela funding, was spent planning the BQ. It went live in 2016 – and promptly slowed down the entire registration process because of technical glitches. Management was not happy so, Masango and his team pulled it and made it a paper questionnaire, much to the same management’s dismay, this time at the idea of 5000 paper questionnaires floating around and perhaps reflecting badly on a leading university.
“It was a learning experience, even for us,” says Masango.

Nevertheless they achieved an 80% success rate of completion, followed by 85% in 2017, 95% in 2018 and a whopping 99% in 2019.

Besides some recurrent glitches, a big problem with the BQ is that most first-year students are not computer literate – only 32% passed their test in Orientation Week. This illiteracy ranges from not knowing how to use a mouse to knowing how to switch on a computer but not how to move from one section of a questionnaire to another. This affects students’ ability to answer the BQ, which has many drop-down options.

Wits now has student assistants to help those filling in the questionnaire on campus, and a BQ Helpdesk, aka Muloiwa answering the phone seven days a week and practically day and night, because registering and filling in the BQ online can take place from a different time zone.

One of the main reasons the unit finally got it to work is the realisation that a vast network of stakeholders is involved in the registration process.

“We have always had meetings but in 2016/2017 they were focused only on a few groups. ICT was getting calls and didn’t know what the BQ was ... We are here, students are there and they are calling and if the people they are phoning are not aware this thing is happening, they will just dismiss them,” says Masango.

“Some people will just tell the students, ‘Oh, don’t worry about it, just leave it, it’s not important’ because they don’t know anything,” says Muloiwa.

Now, she organises a meeting with all of the stakeholders involved in student registration, including the call centre. “They also give us input of this year about some of the technical challenges people encountered," Muloiwa says.

“We even involved Wits marketing so they were posting on Facebook and Twitter about the biographical questionnaire,” she says.

Masango says they now know “stakeholder buy-in becomes critical”.

The next step is to ensure the answers on the BQ are used to their full potential.

First, the information has to be shared with the Senior Executive Team so Muloiwa packages it in terms of the overall view and then broken down based on faculties. It is also shared with the University Council.

“The most critical stakeholders are at the faculty level” because they are the ones who have to use the data to plan interventions to help the students succeed, says Masango.
He explains the rigmarole: “We have the faculty advisers, we’ve got the academics and then we’ve got the assistant dean for teaching and learning, and then we’ve got the faculty teaching and learning committees, where one of our researchers is affiliated with each faculty. Then on an annual basis, after we’ve collected the BQ data, for example Takalani will go to Humanities and say this is what the data is saying and, based on your faculty, this is what we are seeing.

“They take this information and they’re supposed to link it to what their support interventions are.

“In the case, for example, of Science, you will find we have students who say they have never seen a lab in their lives, so they have never seen a beaker. Yet they will be expected to do practicals. So you will have to accommodate those students, making sure they are at the same level as those students coming from privileged schools.”

Four years down the line, they can take it a step further: to use the data from the 2016 biographical questionnaire to see whether those doing three-year courses graduated in 2018. “It is the beauty of it,” says Masango. Now they can use predictive analytics. “We will be able with some certainty to say, ‘Based on our analysis and based on our predictive modelling we know that if you have X number of these variables from the BQ, and you are doing this kind of study programme, then you are going to struggle. And this is the type of support we are going to give you,’ ” says Masango, proud of the “power of the information”.

Next up to be developed in 2019 is integrating the anxiety and depression tools PhQ-9 and GAD 7 into the questionnaire.

The PhQ-9, or Patient Health Questionnaire-9, assesses and monitors severity of depression with questions such as “Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?” and “I have little interest or pleasure in doing things”, with multiple-choice answers ranging from “not at all” to nearly every day”.

The GAD-7, or Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7, is a seven-item anxiety scale using a similar response set to screen for panic, social anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.

4.3 Dashboards – Data at academics’ fingertips

Wits Business Intelligence Services has developed dashboards for academic advisers and lecturers to access data about students.

But it’s not just information on offer; the dashboards provide the opportunity to filter the data so that they are just one click away from a visual display of what they want to know.

Institutional researcher Muloiwa explains the process: “If we had a programme filter for
medical students, you would click on medical students and get a summary according to their biographical data. You might want to extract some data on those students.

“So if you are wanting to know the demographic profile of all those students who did not have access to science labs, you can pull out a list of those ... [and] design a specific intervention for them.

“Generally it’s a visualisation and we build it in data visualisation software. If it’s linked to our server data online then the academic can just log in to the portal and click on the dashboard. If there is data that automatically needs to update, it will.”

She shows how a dashboard can be used to track the progress of first-generation students. The programme outcomes range from “you failed and you cannot come back” to “you can move on to the second year of study”. Filter in the quintiles of the high schools these students attended and their general source of support during university (both parents/single parent/guardian/no support) and it instantly shows if those variables affected their success. And this can be done from one programme to another.

Masango says the advantage of a dashboard is that it can be designed to link different sources of data: “the BQ information, the student ID, their matric results and their academic performance at the University”.

“So if you want to see how a group of first-generation students within a particular study programme has performed in the first quarter of a year, if the marks have been uploaded, then at a click you can have a view.

“If 50% of students are failing in my class and I want to see their demographic profile, through the dashboard I can pull that information and see that. It is interactive,” he says.

Another invaluable use of this tool is that the gateway or “killer courses” dashboard has identified those courses that many students are failing. Intervention programmes to improve pass rates are now being aligned with the so-called killer courses.

By June 2019, student success dashboards had been developed and rolled out to four of the five faculties: Science; Humanities; Commerce, Law and Management; and Health Sciences.

4.4 Using data analytics to pre-empt problems

Having done well enough in matric to be accepted at Wits is no guarantee of success once there.
Various factors can play a role and since 2015 Wits has been using data to predict incoming students’ risk of failing. This early-warning system allows the University to take action to change this probability.

“It is an initial attempt at identifying students at risk. We’re still building on it and it will become more sophisticated,” says Kevin McLoughlin, Head of Business Intelligence Services (BIS) at Wits.

Mamvura has built a predictive model using five years of data of how students fared in their first year.

One of the first things Mamvura discovered was that the cut-off number of points for entry into a programme might be lower than the preferred score needed to pass. That is, a particular programme might require a minimum of 40 but those who pass have scored 44 points or more.

“You got into Wits, you got admitted into a faculty programme but your admission point score (APS) is not enough to pass first year according to the statistics and the model,” says Mamvura.

“So we immediately start to flag them based on the model because they are in a course where they are not likely to do well in their first year. We send the academic advisers in each faculty the list of those students and they start to communicate with them,” says Mamvura. “That’s the first step of identifying who is at risk.”

The second step is the quarter snapshot of students’ marks. Each course mark is broken down into assessment tasks, such as test 1 and test 2, assignment 1 and project 2. Each component is weighted and if the student scores below 50%, they are flagged as being at risk, long before any exam is written.

Since 2017 this “early-warning system” has been improved by adding in information from the Biographical Questionnaire completed during registration. The model now uses 10 variables: admission point score (APS); English, Maths and Physical Science matric marks; gender; race; first-generation status; use of a library and computers before coming to university; distance to campus; whether they are staying in a university residence; and how their studies are being funded.

BIS creates a dashboard with students’ APS scores and marks, initially just for the first quarter, and the faculties can plan interventions to help those students.

And that created one of the challenges of the process. It relies on marks and interventions being captured in the system but, the system changed. Activity Management replaced WAMS, (Wits Academic Marks System), and the structure and marks of some courses were not being uploaded in time to generate risk reports. At the same time, the faculties’ interventions were being recorded on Excel spreadsheets and or on pieces of paper, making it very difficult for BIS to analyse them. However, BIS has launched an improved fast-capture system for recording the interventions, which will be going live.
in July 2019. So the process to transform student success is back on track.

In a way it’s frightening to think that students have barely stepped onto campus and are already identified as being at risk.

McLoughlin says the “at risk” term is the wrong language. “It’s the language we used to begin with. It’s now morphed into ‘student success’ and ‘stream of care data’”. But in reality, the term is still used a lot.

In order to strengthen Wits’s data analytics capability, in November 2018 Mark Milliron of Civitas Learning, a Texas-based data science company that uses predictive analytics to improve student success, visited Wits at the invitation of Prof. Grayson, who is Senior Director for Academic Development at Wits. And in March 2019, two Wits data scientists, Innocent Mamvura and Harshila Dulabh, went to Civitas in Austin for training in student success modelling and tools.

Following that visit, BIS is now extending its focus to students who have passed first year but are at risk of dropping out before they graduate. This persistence modelling project, which includes tracking how often students use the library and other facilities, whether for academics or other activities, will be piloted in late 2019.

“Overseas they have found people with good academic marks suddenly drop out after 75% of the programme has passed. They can’t tell why, but it has nothing to do with their academic performance. But there are background variables like changes in behaviour patterns – have they stopped coming to campus, have they stopped using the learning management system? If their behaviour changes we would like to nudge them and say, ‘You’re doing really well, scoring excellent marks, is there anything we can do to help you?’

“We will be tracking 30+ variables in the pilot phase of our persistence model and we will build up from there,” says McLoughlin.

And Mamvura, fresh from his visit to Texas, is ready to take the lead.

Students, however, are wary of statistics about their probability of graduating. McLoughlin explains: “We’ve had focus groups of students and they’ve told us they don’t want to know, even if it’s high. Because let’s say you tell them they’ve got a 98% chance of passing, they might slack off. And if it’s low, they have 20% chance of passing, they may not even try.

“So it’s very important we use those measures behind the scenes to communicate in a positive way with the students. So if they’ve got a 98% chance of passing, we might send an email (it’s not happening yet, we’re building various models) saying, ‘We’ve noticed you’ve done really well, you’re in the last mile of your studies, is there anything we can do to assist you any further?’”
CHAPTER 5
5.1 Faculty-based student support – Advisors, mentors and more

Wits campuses are thronging with students going from one lecture or practical or tutorial to another.

What is less obvious but equally active is the multifaceted networks at the University to help the students succeed.

There are about 40 initiatives to address poor throughput rates and improve student success. Many are faculty based and their activities range from using data to identify students “at risk”, and then referring them to relevant University support structures, to providing academic assistance with specific subjects and psychosocial support.

Those that work within these initiatives have different titles and roles. Each faculty has an Assistant Dean for Teaching and Learning (which usually includes the portfolio of undergraduates). There are 10 student advisors paid for by the state’s University Capacity Development Grant – two in each faculty. Some of these advisors have different job titles and there are still others who work in faculty student support but are paid by the faculties themselves.

This is a snapshot of the faculty-based contexts and structures designed to aid student success:

The Faculty of Health Sciences provides assistance through the OSS, which used to stand for the Office of Student Support but is now the Office of Student Success “in line with the University’s positive language around access and success”, says Professor Judith Bruce, the faculty’s Assistant Dean for Teaching, Learning and Undergraduate Affairs.

“There’s a whole floor of dedicated staff who look after students and provide both academic support and psychosocial support. We have psychologists and academic developers and at-risk co-ordinators who work with students depending on what their problems are.
“Medicine is one of the few degrees that has a high pass rate, but even in Medicine there are students who struggle. But it is perhaps psychological, emotional or mental issues that impact on their academic performance. Anxiety is a big thing because it is such a highly competitive environment and the load is heavy, and the academic year is long.”

Health Sciences is unique in that is has what Prof. Bruce refers to as the “genuinely at-risk” student.

“Our faculty has changed its admission criteria, which immediately implies that we’ve got to put more resources into supporting those students. You can’t just let them in and not let them out.”

Students must have the marks to be in Health Sciences in the first place, but many are at the lower range of the composite index. “Although there is a pecking order and I will only see the student if he/she has exhausted all the avenues,” Prof. Bruce also advises students in her office from 6.30am before they go off to their clinical practice at hospitals.

Almost all the disciplines have a mentoring programme. “Mentoring is about socialising someone in a specific profession or career, showing them the ropes, showing them how to succeed,” says Prof. Bruce.

Professor Garth Stevens, Acting Dean of Humanities, says they deal “with everything from curriculum planning to ‘at risk’ students to supporting students. That is at the faculty level, but schools tend to have their own initiatives too – everything from tutorial programmes to additional support.

“Essentially we run much of the teaching and learning support from the Faculty and the assistant dean, together with two dedicated teaching and learning advisers, Nompumelelo Bhengu and Dr Lindiwe Tshuma.”

The Assistant Dean, Heila Jordaan, who is responsible for learning, teaching and undergraduate affairs, says Bhengu and Tshuma’s primary but not exclusive focus is student support: “They will consult with any students who have any difficulty, but they are also proactive in contacting students who look as though they are struggling by sending them emails and inviting them for consultations – and many of them actually take up the opportunity. They also run workshops on a regular basis to address issues around preparing for exams.”

Humanities relies a lot on data from the Analytics and Institutional Research Unit and is using it for more than just identifying students at risk. Jordaan often asks its faculty representative in the unit, Takalani Muloiwa, to do a particular analysis and is happy to report that 46% of Humanities students are scoring above 60% on average.
This allow them to provide a different kind of support, that is, of helping top students become future academics.

Prof. Stevens says: “Teaching and learning is partly about students who are at risk of not being successful at university, or taking longer to get through the system, but if just under 50% of students are attaining that result, you also have the capacity to start identifying talent.”

And that is what Humanities is doing: extending success for these talented students by advising them to take part in initiatives that groom them to become academics who will add to the diversity profile. Each year the faculty identifies five top final-year students for the Mellon-Mays scholarship, which pays them to do a rigorous training course to develop their academic skills.

The other project to identify talent is THInK (Transforming the Humanities through Interdisciplinary Knowledge): Towards a New Generation of African Scholars, which offers a five-year doctoral programme also funded by the Andrew W Mellon Foundation.

**Commerce, Law and Management** has its flagship Road to Success Programme (RSP) for all its undergraduates, which preliminary research shows is making a significant difference.

Jason Cohen, Deputy Dean of the faculty and Assistant Dean for Research, says “it explores holistically the problems of student-support issues so it has a strong focus on the psychosocial issues that students are facing”.

“It deals mostly with ‘at risk’ students and provides the one-on-one coaching that students need to make informed decisions about degree programmes and tries to channel them to the other support structures in the University.”

RSP is run by Danie de Klerk, the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Affairs, lecturer Tshepiso Maleswena, and Linda Spark from the School of Economic and Business Sciences, who provides strategic guidance.

One of the key challenges facing the CLM Faculty is the popularity of the Bachelor of Accounting Science degree, which is a requirement to qualify as a chartered accountant. “The Bachelor of Accounts degree is a very aspirational qualification,” says Cohen. “A lot of students are quite adamant they need that qualification and a lot of the support and the time that our Road to Success Programme spends working with students is trying to ensure there is an appropriate degree fit. A good number of the
problems arise because students struggle within the accounting degree programme while there are other possible routes and avenues they can take.”

So a lot of RSP’s focus is curriculum counselling and trying to understand student behaviour. Cohen says students may be failing because they are not attending lectures. When asked why, they say it’s because they are bored, and probed further, say it’s because they are not really sure they’re doing the right course but they have all this family pressure to do it.

“The Road to Success Programme is trying to probe behind the marks and not just ... say, ‘Oh well, you’re failing this; you must drop accounting and pick up marketing.’ ” They also provide mentoring and every first year gets a senior student as a mentor, which provides peer grouping.

Professor Imraan Valodia, Dean of Commerce, Law and Management, says they offer a lot of “teaching innovation that goes into supporting the students” especially in courses that become blockages because of their high failure rates.

The Auditing and Tax second-year courses changed from being semester to full-year courses because they were found to be “too compressed and students weren’t given enough time to integrate knowledge and material”, says Cohen. “And that came from an analysis of pass rates and discussions and workshops between our teaching and learning committee and the School to try figure out what kinds of interventions might work.

“We also tried allowing students to repeat the course part time in the evenings so there wouldn’t be a blockage, but that didn’t work so well. It worked better to stretch the course.”

Professor Liz Brenner has been in the Science Faculty since 1983 but, when she became Assistant Dean for Teaching and Learning in October 2017, she decided students needed to be supported holistically. “They really need someone special, who is experienced in the academic environment and who has psychology training and possibly also a teaching qualification, someone who will understand what students are going through,” she says.

Professor Rob Veale, then her head of School and now Acting Dean of the faculty, came up with the job title of “Student Wellness and Learning Facilitator”, and so Grant Demas’s job was created.

“I see 15 to 17 students every day back to back,” says Demas of his 30-minute sessions, so whatever he is doing is working.
He says it is not therapy, which the CCDU provides, and students have to sign a form acknowledging that. Instead, he offers collaborative learning. “It’s about sharing stories, collaborative chatting, but always coupled with how you are faring academically,” he says.

The student sets an agenda: “I feel angry” or “I oversleep” or “I am hungry”, and “then they set a vision, a goal, for themselves, so we are addressing the challenges”, Demas says. “It’s about enabling empowerment rather than empowering.”

Prof. Brenner says its strength is that it is “on-going support”. She cites the example of one chemistry student who has no parents and no means of support. “His studies went into abeyance for some time, he dropped out of his first semester last year and the faculty made a mistake by allowing him to register for the second semester when he hadn’t done the first one. And because they had made the mistake they said, ‘Okay, you can come back to the first half and do it this year.’ From getting in the 20s he finished with marks in the 80s. He is now still doing quite well and is talking of doing honours. He had no hope of ever going anywhere.

“I think he saw Grant (Demas) every second day.”

Prof. Veale says: “This is the link that was missing, those soft skills and the interactions with students around their problems … in settling some of those anxieties it permits the student to focus better on their academics. That is where the improvement is.” He says the problems Science students face are not unique. “If it was specific, we wouldn’t have had to develop the system we have, which is actually quite complicated. If you could just pinpoint what specific problems they have we would be able to remedy them somewhat more easily.”

But despite students’ top marks that ensured a place in the faculty, they often have academic-related issues and that is where Irene Kamara, the academic adviser, and Maryke Kluyts, Academic Skills Coordinator, do their bit. “They think they understand when they’re studying but when they get to exams they find they can’t apply what they’ve learned,” says Kamara. “They’re good at rote learning and memorising but can’t link concepts,” says Prof. Brenner.

To reduce the academic jump between first and second year they have developed a 20-hour course for second years called Tools for Science Students, which started in May 2019. It includes things like how to study and not to procrastinate and how to approach different types of questions.

“And how to revise,” says Prof Veale, “because we have always said to students: ‘You need to revise.’ We know what we mean by that but it is not just sitting down and reading your notes. It’s dividing your time between the subjects and how to actually reinforce what you have done.”

The Faculty has also set up a mentorship programme where second years mentor the
first years and the third years mentor the second years. "And the third years actually asked if the honours students could mentor them," says Prof. Brenner. "It’s not mentoring in the sense of helping you do well academically. This is more a buddy."

Says Prof Veale: “To put it in the normal terminology, this is not extra lessons. That doesn’t work. So the second years can interact with the first years and tell them what they found difficult, how they overcame it.”

They put the students into support groups and Kamara has created Whatsapp groups, none of which is compulsory.

Prof. Veale says the success of these initiatives is “the free form”. In an environment where they have to go to lectures and tutorials and practicals, this choice “gives them the space in order to take this on, without saying ‘you have to appear at 11 o’clock at a particular place’. That doesn’t work with support,” he says.

Professor Anne Fitchett, Acting Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, says its Academic Development Unit (ADU), headed by Dr Rodney Genga, is its hub for student support. Fumane Mpenyane and Mahlate Rabothata are the two student advisors.

Each School also has its own initiatives. The School of Mining Engineering, for example, has a mentorship programme where every first-year student is assigned a mentor “who stays with them throughout their career but the major support is in first year,” says Prof Fitchett. “They are encouraged to go to regular mentor meetings and discuss everything from adaptation to university, study skills and time-management skills. That is the school with the most robust and structured academic support.”

She says the School of Architecture and Planning has very small class numbers and “a studio-orientated continuous assessment kind of model". Within the first week or so lecturers know every single student by name and “tend to have their finger on the pulse”. This individualised approach helps reveal potential problems very early to ensure appropriate support measures are taken.

Apart from these two schools with the “most hot-wired approaches to student support” the ADU deals with the entire Faculty.

“Our ADU is probably the most innovative part of our whole Faculty,” she says. “Wherever the bright ideas are happening, they will tend to either have been initiated by ADU or ADU will be the support structure that allows those initiatives to be carried out.”

The ADU provides ongoing support, some of it content-driven, such as tutorials for Maths,
Physics and Chemistry, but also extends to workshops on time management and study skills.

The ADU’s big success is having decreased the number of high-risk courses, which have a high failure rate. “We’ve gradually been chipping away so from a suite of 12 to 14 courses we’ve now got that down to only about three courses that are at risk,” says Prof. Fitchett. And some first-year courses, such as Applied Mathematics and Electrical Engineering, now have a 97% pass rate.

They have achieved this through a three-pronged approach: winter school for some courses, boot camp for others such as Computer Programming (which has had some very positive results, says Prof. Fitchett), and by changing the timetable and moving high-risk courses into the first semester, which students can redo if need be through Wits Plus (see Chapter 7). “That second shot at it is deemed to be an extended programme; so it’s not that they failed and then repeated the course but that they have simply continued in a different mode of teaching,” she says.

This has led to a great improvement in the first-year Chemistry course as well as some mechanical engineering courses in second year. “Because course by course the throughput rate is good, but year by year of study is not nearly so good because of these high-risk courses,” says Prof. Fitchett.

“Identifying is very easy. We have good data as to which courses have a high failure rate.”

Not all the faculties have stats to back up the success of their initiatives. Mxolisi Masango, head of Institutional Research, pointed out at the Siyaphumelela 2019 conference in Johannesburg that there is “no official institutional-level evaluation of these student success initiatives for their effectiveness and impact”.

Masango has now embarked on a project to rectify this. His research is part of the Siyaphumelela initiative (see Chapter 4) and Wits will be paid an additional $100 000 if the Kresge Foundation approves the bonus grant progress report.

Masango presented a paper about his project at the conference that generated a lot of interest. Titled “Evaluation of faculty-based student support initiatives – a theory of change approach”, it pinpointed the factors to be considered:

- What has informed the design and content of the current support initiatives? The critical question is: what data has been used?
- Are there clear targets to be achieved?
- How do we know if the initiatives are successful?
- How are we going to measure if we are succeeding?
- How do we know if another initiative is likely to work even better?

The outcome of his research will be the next big step in Wits’s student success initiatives.
5.2 Institution-level student support

Student Affairs

The role of the Dean of Student Affairs has been compared to that of a public protector because the Dean has to promote fairness and accountability in matters relating to students and the University.

Jerome September, who was appointed as the Dean in May 2018, having joined the university just three months earlier, outlines his range of duties: “In my portfolio is campus housing; Wits Sports; careers and counselling; the campus clinic; and the broad area of student governance, leadership development and community outreach.” All in all he has five units he is responsible for, including the Wits Citizenship and Community Outreach (WCCO), and the Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU).

Dealing with students is something September knows all about after almost four years as Head of Student Affairs at the new Sol Plaatje University in Kimberley, and many years at UCT, where he was Manager of Student Governance and Leadership, and later Special Projects Adviser to the Director of the International Academic Programmes Office.
At Wits, Student Affairs has broadened its scope and WCCO is increasingly focused on the community across campus.

Big areas of attention are food security and homelessness.

Homelessness, that is, “students who for one or other reason do not have a place to stay”, is a dynamic problem as it is often in flux, says September. “The SRC will say there are about 1 000 people sleeping on campus. Now at some point that might be true but there’s a nuance to it,” he says. “There is a group of students who really don’t have a place to stay. Then there’s a group of students who have a place to stay, they’re from the greater Johannesburg area but the public transport is not reliable after a certain time.”

His empathy for these students is evident when he slips into the first person: “The trains might be delayed because I come from an area where I am heavily dependent on a taxi or a train. Tomorrow I have a test at 9 o’clock, so I study as late as I can and I sleep wherever I can put my head down so that tomorrow morning I’m in time for the test.”

Temporary homelessness also occurs, especially during exam time, because students do not have a suitable place to study at home.

The more permanently homeless student is usually one whose home circumstances have changed, whose funding has been withdrawn, or who is waiting for money from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). The latter problem has been exacerbated since December 2017 when free higher education was extended, with immediate effect, for those whose household income was up to R350 000 a year.

“Suddenly a group that did not previously qualify, qualifies. That group apply for funding but wait for an outcome. So while you wait for an outcome, you don’t have anywhere to stay,” says September.

The #FeesMustFall student movement in 2016 raised awareness of the accommodation problem, which has worsened with an increasing number of poorer students coming to Wits. “We are now sitting at 20% or so of our students being NSFAS-qualifying students and maybe another 20% or so being so-called missing middle students (from households with an annual income of less than R600 000),” he says.

But Wits has taken decisive action, finding solutions by forming partnerships with external stakeholders.

In November 2018 the Wits Council approved a Hardship Fund of R10million to help students with changed circumstances, and especially the missing middle, to register. Wits added R3million to the fund. From the total R13million, it set aside R5million for accommodation and negotiated a discount with a private accommodation provider, South
Point, for 160 beds at R250 000 for a year. South Point itself sponsored 20, another company added 10, and so Wits provided “a kind of accommodation bursary”, he says.

September, who has a Masters in Human Rights Law from UCT, has been quoted as saying that he is “particularly interested in issues of human rights and social justice, and will, within University parameters, try to implement programmes and policies that seek to create an inclusive campus environment”.

So how does he sleep at night with so many students reaching out to him for help, even informally through Facebook and Twitter?

“You do your best to put whatever systems and support in place, and you help where you can. Part of the challenge is that these are societal problems and as a university we cannot solve them on our own.

“Homelessness and food insecurity are, in fact, global phenomena. There is a similar challenge in the US, UK and Australia, so it’s a growing issue.”

And it’s not an exclusively Wits challenge; “most of our local universities will have some sort of food programme,” he says.

The University has a bursary fund of R100 million, but the demand is even greater so the Dean’s office does what it can. Then it hands out the website address of feenix.org, a site that provides crowdfunding for students registered at local institutions and whose annual household income is less than R600 000.

“We’re the biggest beneficiary of that at the moment,” says September.

**Food security for students**

Every day of the academic year, at least 1000 Wits students receive a hot lunch through the Masidleni Daily Meal Project. Each month, the Wits Food Bank supplies non-perishables to almost 3000 students. The Wits Food Gardens supplement this with fresh produce. These three initiatives, together with a community kitchen, form the Wits Food Programme.

Housed in a tiny heritage building aptly named The Sanctuary, perched on the edge of the Cricket Oval on East Campus, the programme is operated by the WCCO. Astoundingly, the outreach has only two full-time staff members, and a plethora of student volunteers. The WCCO, initially established to promote community service through student volunteerism on and off campus, has in recent years focused heavily on needy Wits students.
Wits Food Bank

“During 2013, we became aware that students were going hungry on campus,” says Karuna Singh, Senior Programme Adviser at the WCCO. So when the Zambian Students’ Society inquired about a volunteer project, Singh suggested they collect food for students. Thus the Wits Food Bank was born.

Initially it was supported mainly by donations from staff, students and their friends and families, but corporates and religious groups became involved later. Since October 2017, Tiger Brands has supplied non-perishable items, like mealie meal and canned foods, to the value of R2.8million a year. Staff, students and the public continue their support.

“Many of our students are sustained by this food bank alone,” Singh notes.

Masidleni Daily Meal Project

Masidleni operates through the Gift of the Givers Foundation relief organisation, which Wits pays to provide 1 000 meals a day.

Singh says Gift of the Givers had sponsored some free meals and food already when she first approached them. During the #FeesMustFall protests in 2016, Wits commissioned Gift of the Givers to supply a daily hot meal to hungry students. By 2018, 600 students were being fed daily. In 2019, for the first time, the university allocated R2.9million to Masidleni, which allowed the WCCO to increase the number to 1000 daily. Although the University previously paid food bills incurred, the upfront allocation enhances planning.

Masidleni and the Wits Food Bank are accessed by swiping a student card. Beneficiaries are entitled to a hot meal once a day and a food pack every four weeks.
“As an operations centre,” observes Singh, “we don’t have the resources for vetting, but our volunteers are sussed, and we’ve analysed our database of students from the programme.” Of almost 3 000 students who regularly receive Food Bank parcels, about half are funded by NSFAS, which, says Singh “already indicates that they have a need”. The relative anonymity of the card-swipe system helps to maintain student dignity and avoid stigmatisation.

**Wits Food Gardens and the Student Communal Kitchen**

The Inala Forum, a student-led WCCO project, initiated the food gardens to supplement the Food Bank with fresh fruit and vegetables. The WCCO now collaborates with the Co-operative and Policy Alternative Centre (Copac) to plant seasonal fresh produce. Five gardens have been established through funding from the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, with more to follow. Students plant and maintain these gardens, with input from established small-scale farmers. Ultimately, the agreement between Copac and Wits will establish the first ecocentric university in South Africa.

The latest initiative is the Student Communal Kitchen at The Sanctuary. It opened in April 2019, encouraging students to cook meals. But it has taken off slowly; Singh says it’s difficult to get students to self-organise and use the kitchen, for example by cooking group meals on a rotational basis. She hopes for a culture change where facilities such as the gardens and kitchen are optimally utilised.

Though the programme’s impact on academic performance is difficult to measure, students claim their results have improved because they are eating regular, healthier meals, observes Singh. Several Psychology Masters researchers are compiling narratives from students on the programme, with the hopes of informing further research.

Singh adds that “many academics are beginning to value the programme” as they become aware of its scope. Other universities are using it as a benchmark.

In 2016, several former Witsies established the South African Student Solidarity Foundation for Education as a channel for alumni of all universities to assist needy students.

It currently contributes R250 000 a year to feeding Wits students. Co-founder Linda Vilakazi says “many students ... continue to suffer the indignity of hunger and homelessness on our campuses. We must tackle this problem bottom-up until all deserving students can study in dignity.”
“Over the past five years at CCDU there’s been a spike in severity – which reflects national and international trends – and a sharp increase in students presenting with mental health issues including depression, anxiety, family issues and trauma-related concerns,” she observes.

They have also seen more students with suicidal thoughts. “We’re always grateful when they come here for counselling, because then we can try and help.”

In response to this growing need, since April 2019 Wits students in crisis can call the toll-free number 0800-111-331 for professional support, even if they are off campus or far from Johannesburg during weekends and holidays. The Wits Student Crisis Line, operated by Independent Counselling and Advisory Services (ICAS), is available 24/7/365 and has already proven really helpful.

CCDU also trains mentors and wellness champions, who promote mental health through numerous campaigns. “We work with various council bodies, student leadership and academics. This collaboration is critical,” says Lunsky.

She praises the leadership of Dean of Student Affairs Jerome September, “who’s truly been an amazing ambassador for mental health”. Thanks to him, senior management has approved more staff for the CCDU.

“The past three years have seen an exponential increase in students seeking life coaching,” Lunsky notes.
“Many students who request life coaching don’t have mental health issues, nor do they need career counselling,” she observes. Rather, they are seeking help that has elements of both but is more about helping them overcome obstacles such as poor motivation, or ill-defined goals.

“On the careers side, there’s a definite shift away from students seeking formal assessment,” Lunsky says. “The range of career options available to students has changed – companies that come to campus to recruit graduates are different to five years ago. They’re more technical, have increased online presence and a bigger focus on ICT skills. This obviously impacts how we prepare students for the world of work.”

Bongi Ndlovu, Graduate Recruitment Coordinator at CCDU, says the Journey to Employability Programme helps students develop the soft skills that many employers now prioritise alongside technical and professional competency. Ndlovu organises career fairs as opportunities for prospective employers to meet and recruit students. “Career fairs are our biggest buzz, well received by companies and students,” she enthuses.

The fairs are sector-specific, with separate events for Engineering, IT and Science, Accounting, plus a general one. Participating companies take stands to showcase their core business. It is an opportunity for networking and brand-building as well as matching students to employers.

There are about five fairs a year, with a new entrepreneurship one to be held in August 2019. Punted as “a new kid on the block”, the entrepreneurship fair will not host the usual big businesses. Instead, it will feature young businesses on campus, those that began as entrepreneur-type operations, as well as companies specifically looking for employees with entrepreneurial abilities.

The fairs are taken seriously. Ndlovu and her colleagues “ensure students are well prepared and know what questions to ask”. Some students receive tentative employment offers through the fairs, while others gain an inside track to specific companies.

“We also run competitions where students vote for the best prospective employer, based on their stand appeal and interactions,” says Ndlovu. “So great is our standard of career fairs that Wits was nominated in the category ‘Best Career Fair’ 2018 in the South African Graduate Employers Associations (SAGEA) Awards. Our students are equally benefitting and acknowledging of our efforts as we were nominated in the category ‘University Graduate Recruitment Programme Satisfaction’ 2017 of the Universum (international research company) Awards.”

Lunsky says the CCDU relies on interns and voluntary student ambassadors to run these fairs. “It’s very much student-driven,” agrees Ndlovu, “because student voices are so important in getting the word out and they are also physically present on the day.”

Lunsky says most undergraduates who use the CCDU’s services are in second year, “though we get students from all years, including postgraduates up to PhD level”.

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### Participation in careers fairs

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>5 Fairs</th>
<th>6 Fairs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Science, IT and Engineering – 34 companies participated</td>
<td>IT and Engineering – 38 companies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accounting – 30 companies</td>
<td>Accounting x3 – 39</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Internship – 23 companies</td>
<td>Maths and Science – 14 companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General x 2 – 85 companies</td>
<td>General – 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>IT and Engineering – 38 companies</td>
<td>Accounting x3 – 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accounting x3 – 39</td>
<td>Maths and Science – 14 companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>General – 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Engineering – 18 companies</td>
<td>Engineering – 11 companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IT &amp; Comp Science – 15</td>
<td>IT and Comp Science – 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accounting x3 – 39</td>
<td>Accounting x3 – 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General x 2 – 62</td>
<td>General – 48</td>
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<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Engineering – 11 companies</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>IT and Comp Science – 26</td>
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<td>Accounting x3 – 37</td>
<td>Accounting x3 – 37</td>
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<td></td>
<td>General – 48</td>
<td>General – 48</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>Engineering – 13 companies</td>
<td>Engineering – 13 companies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IT and Computer Science – 22</td>
<td>IT and Computer Science – 22</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accounting x 3 – 39</td>
<td>Accounting x 3 – 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General – still to take place</td>
<td>General – still to take place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entrepreneurship – still to take place</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship – still to take place</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Music educator Dr Susan Harrop-Allin, who won a national teaching and learning award in 2018, with 4th-year Community Music students: Alexandria James, Anastasia Loukakis, Thato Maraisane and Thuli Magubani. Image: Lauren Mulligan
6.1 Professional development opportunities for academics – educating the educators

The Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development

Rita Kizito, director of the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development (CLTD) says gone are the days when, because you were a professor, it was assumed you knew how to teach. Today, the approach is to develop the academic as a holistic practitioner.

“The academic is central to making sure the student succeeds. In some countries you cannot get tenure unless you have done some sort of (teacher) training,” she says. In this context, the CLTD provides continuous support for the professional development of Wits academics.

It functions as an academic centre, with a mission to:

- Coordinate several teaching and learning functions;
- Support academic staff’s professional development focusing on teaching;
- Engage with and support curriculum renewal and transformation;
- Support academics in improving their use of blended and online learning; and
- Contribute to higher education research and policy development.

CLTD’s role has changed over the years from when it first offered training and development to all Wits employees. In 2015, it merged with the Wits Writing Centre (see chapter 9), and the eLearning, Support and Innovation Unit. In early 2018, support of students’ academic development was moved to a unit reporting to the Senior Director: Academic Affairs, Professor Diane Grayson.

CLTD now focuses on supporting:

- Academic professional learning and development, which includes assessment and curriculum design;
- Learning and writing; and
- Evaluation.
It has an advisory board, which meets twice a year. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic, Professor Andrew Crouch, used to chair the board but from 2019 Prof. Grayson has been the chair.

CLTD has a staff of 30 and addresses institutional change through eight key goals, namely to:

- Endorse and enrich the status of teaching and learning at Wits;
- Support academics as teachers and researchers;
- Promote inclusivity and diversity through collaborative curriculum renewal processes;
- Promote and support the adoption of blended and online teaching and learning approaches;
- Promote university-wide Communities of Practice that aim to improve teaching and learning;
- Promote and support effective evaluation practices;
- Enrich and support student learning experiences; and
- Promote and develop research in higher education and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

The evaluation unit is in the process of testing a new online course and teaching evaluation tool, Blue Explorance, as the existing system is outdated and does not allow for scalability.

CLTD has been piloting a series of workshops on curriculum design and development, combined with self-directed online materials, which will be released in 2020.

Courses are on offer to academics throughout the year, not all exclusively face-to-face. A popular course is the Teaching Role, whose aim, says Kizito, “is to introduce academics to simple, practical ways of making student learning possible”. Academics learn about the principles of facilitating learning, curriculum knowledge and blended-learning design, an assessment overview, and embedding writing in the curriculum. “The culmination is a micro teaching session during which participants receive feedback on their performance, and are allowed to reflect on their practice,” says Kizito.

Other popular courses are to do with recurruculation (the reform of curricula for inclusivity and diversity, making them more relevant to the South African context); evaluation of teaching and courses; blended learning; and assessment of students.

A highlight at the beginning of 2019 was a four-day workshop, “Incorporating Active Blended Learning: An approach to learning and teaching for the digital age”. It was facilitated by Professor Alejandro (Ale) Armellini and Dr Shirley Bennett from the Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, University of Northampton, UK. Resources from this workshop are being redeveloped for the Wits environment.
Statistically, the total number of CLTD interventions and provisions surged between 2015 and 2016, but then declined. The 2019 figure is until May and is expected to rise markedly during the June/July period, the academic break, when most of the interventions occur.

Kizito says the “decline” in the number of interventions is not as negative as it appears. Instead, it shows CLTD’s programmes are becoming more focused. Also, the reporting mechanisms from 2015 to mid-2017 were different and CLTD is devising a mechanism for reporting on individual consultations in a fair manner. This will include the objectives of the consultation, actual time spent, and whether the objectives were achieved or not.

These include short learning programmes, workshops, seminars, symposiums and conferences of a duration from 45 minutes to a semester.

*Until May
Time allocation is a big challenge. “There is simply not the time for academics to engage always with a face-to-face component. You cannot do these things unless there is time allocated to it and there is recognition. We have made sure that part of the workload is given to continuous professional development.”

In terms of its 2022 Strategic Framework, Wits is positioning itself as a research-intensive university.

Kizito says this is a challenge to the CLTD’s work as it keeps teaching subordinate to research performance. She believes “the introduction of a Wits Continuous Development Framework, contoured according to the National Framework for Enhancing Academics as Teachers" will help support academics’ development.

“Mandating academics to undertake compulsory activities could become counter-productive. There needs to be a mechanism set up to probe and balance individual academic freedoms with the collective needs of the institution," she says.

Kizito says the centre is also trying to push the complexities of what a research-intensive university requires. “Even our teaching is becoming more research informed and needs to uphold in-depth knowledge, critical thinking and the reflexivity required for the student and also for the type of teacher,” she says.

Beginning in 2018, staff from the CLTD and the Quality and Academic Planning Office (QAPO) are working together closely to ensure that academic offerings developed at Wits are of a high standard and are both educationally sound and technically correct. In 2018 staff from the two units produced a resource manual, Guidelines for Curriculum Development at Wits. In 2019, QAPO staff produced another manual, Guidelines for Planning, Approval and Quality Assurance of Academic Developments, to ensure that all stakeholders at Wits know what quality assurance processes need to be followed.

In order to begin to respond to the need for transformation of curricula away from the dominant epistemologies of the global North and towards greater inclusion of African epistemologies, in 2018 the CLTD hosted a series of open debates around the broad theme of decolonising the curriculum. In 2019, it broadened this initiative to include four seminars, three given by eminent academics and one in which students were the presenters.

The Early Career Academic Development Programme

Beginning an academic career can be daunting. Increasingly, Early-Career Academics (ECAs) face a number of challenges. They have to cope with teaching large classes, curriculum design and reform issues, integration of technology, completing a PhD,
publishing, and surviving in a rapidly changing higher education environment. CLTD and the Research Office have joined forces to facilitate the Wits Early Career Academic Development (ECAD) Programme. This professional development programme provides holistic institutional support for ECAs with less than five years’ experience in higher education. The programme supports a scholarly and contextualised orientation to research and to teaching, learning, educational technology, and assessment practices in the higher education classroom. It provides a mechanism for inducting new academic staff into their dual roles of researchers and educators.

The Early Career Academic Development Programme is a one-year, part-time series of workshops, discussion groups and a writing retreat. It aims to enhance research and teaching skills, and foster academic citizenship, that is, communication and cooperation between academics at Wits and at the national and global levels. Wits envisages a new corps of highly skilled, highly motivated academics with a strong scholarly identity.

Dr Robin Drennan, Director of the Research Office, is proud of the programme’s holistic approach: “Rather than research and teaching competing for the same resources, and seeing them as distracting from each other, we want to develop rounded academics, who have integrated their teaching and research identities.”

Drennan acknowledges there’s also a transformational imperative to ensure a diverse staff complement.

Rieta Ganas, Education Development Officer at the CLTD, says another goal is “to fast-track the PhD process, supporting participants to acquire their doctorates as soon as possible”.

Since 2018, funding from the Department of Higher Education and Training in the form of the University Capacity Development Grant provides R25 000 per participant for any combination of the three areas (research, teaching and academic citizenship).

All participants in the programme must attend:

- A full-day workshop on teaching and learning, research and academic citizenship;
- At least four CLTD workshops chosen from a range of options aimed at enhancing their teaching role and curriculum development;
- At least one facilitated writing retreat (non-residential but off campus) to hone their writing skills and have time to complete some writing; and
- At least four community of practice meetings where they can share experiences and discuss challenges and solutions with other new academics, albeit in different fields.
Each participant is assigned a mentor through their school or department, someone who has had a similar career path and can offer guidance. This eases the transition into Wits academic life, and helps new academics identify situations that will enable their success as well as constraints they may have to work around. Ganas says this helps them “begin to build corporate agency and voice, and create optimal environments for themselves”.

The Early Career Academic Development Programme also aims to enhance time management and resilience.

“Early-career academics are required to do lots of undergraduate teaching, which can be very time-consuming, so proper time management is essential,” says Drennan. The programme teaches resilience in the face of rejection, for example “when an article submitted to a journal is rejected, they don’t collapse in a heap but are aware that even seasoned academics face this, and are encouraged to try again... By connecting them with mentors who have undergone similar experiences, they feel less isolated.” The coordinators liaise closely with the senior academics to whom the participants report, to ensure buy-in and support from their schools and faculties.

“We want the deans and heads of departments to view this programme as something that helps them too,” says Ganas. For instance, by attending conferences and workshops beyond Wits, new academics are exposed to current research and will form networks that are introduced back into their departments. It is a win-win situation.

Several participants have already improved their publication record and academic stature. Dr Pedzisai Mazengenya, from Anatomical Sciences, was promoted to senior lecturer the very year he completed the programme. Mazengenya says the grant enables people to attend conferences and produce published research to advance their careers. “Above all,” he notes, “it gave me the opportunity to share similar problems with staff from various departments, which I never thought existed.”

Dr Grant Andrews, who lectures at the Wits School of Education, credits the programme with shaping his journey at the university: “After the workshops and mentoring sessions, I feel much better equipped to reach my potential as a researcher and as an educator. Meeting other early-career academics and working closely with the research office has given me a support system that I know I can rely on. It was the best professional decision I could have made at this point in my career.”

Natasha Parkins-Maliko, an associate lecturer in the Department of Translation and Interpreting, agrees. She is doing the programme this year and says it is providing her with “an interrogative mirror to critically explore, reflect and systematically address the largely underplayed aspects of lived experience and its relevance in contributing to dated epistemic traditions”.
Staff of the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development (CLTD)

TOP ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Del King Senior Office Administrator, Adriano Giovanelli Instructional Designer, Bal- rye Monareng Instructional Designer, Nthabiseng Mokoena Evaluation Assistant, Nazira Hoosen Educational Developer/Lecturer: HE

ROW 2, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Khanyi Motaung Admin Assistant, Dominique Wooldridge Learning Experience Design Team Leader, Sharon Coetzer Instructional Designer, Rita Kizito Director, Janet King Instructional Designer

ROW 3, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Neo Pellele and Toni Malgas Instructional Designers, Candice Michaels Academic Programme Coordinator, Nkaba Senne Instructional Designer, Rieta Ganas Educational Developer/Lecturer: HE, Kgaogelo Lekota Educational Developer

ROW 4, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Renee Kock Instructional Designer, Shogan Naidoo Instructional Designer, Sipho Hlabane Educational Developer/Lecturer: HE, Gent Wissing Deputy-Director and Head: Learning & Teaching, Lindi Gubevu CLTD Cleaner

ROW 5, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Shane Pachagadu Instructional Design Team Leader, Lerato Seohatse Educational Developer, Najma Aghardien Educational Developer/Lecturer: HE, Mpu- mi Mazibuko Coordinator: Evaluation Services, Ashely Mabeba Instructional Designer

BOTTOM ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT:
Pamela Nichols Head: Learning & Writing, Rejoice Nsibande Head: Evaluation Services, Yasmin Dadabhay Academic Programme Coordinator
6.2 Qualifications in Teaching and Learning

Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education [PGDipE(HE)]

Academics are experts with a deep knowledge of their study area. But they often have scant knowledge of how to impart that knowledge effectively to their students. As Professor Karin Brodie, former head of the Wits School of Education, said at a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education graduation ceremony in March 2017: “We (educators) need to know our disciplines well. We also need to know how learning of our disciplines takes place – learning mathematics is very different from learning history, for example.”

In a quest to develop professional educators and provide them with an accredited qualification in line with global standards, Wits introduced the Postgraduate Diploma in Education in the field of Higher Education [PGDipE(HE)] in 2015. Aimed primarily at lecturers, the honours-level diploma is offered part-time over two years, with weekly classes co-taught by facilitators from various backgrounds.

It comprises four modules:

- Learning and Teaching in Higher Education;
- Curriculum Design and Development in Higher Education;
- Assessment in Higher Education; and then either
- New Directions in Higher Education, a research-based project, or Enhancing Postgraduate Supervision.

Course coordinator Dr Laura Dison, senior lecturer at the Wits School of Education, views the PGDipE(HE) as a scholarly, professional avenue for academic development, aligned with international trends and growing interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning. It’s a vast improvement, she says, on previous adhoc “tips for teachers” attempts at professional development.

Economics lecturer Althea Moodley, who gained her diploma in July 2018, agrees: “You don’t know what you don’t know as a teacher until you start this programme.”

Jointly offered by the Wits School of Education and the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development, the PGDipE(HE) is open to academics from all faculties. Each participant is assigned a mentor, often someone in their discipline. The mentoring aspect, while voluntary, is particularly useful for those new to educational discourse, since students must prepare critical reading responses for each module.

The PGDipE(HE) attracts growing numbers of academics across disciplines. So far there are 62 graduates, with an estimated 75 expected by 2020. Ten students from the first cohort of 13 graduated with distinction, signalling they had developed a genuine de-
sire to excel as educators.

Dr Samuel Khoza, who completed his PhD in Technology Education prior to undertaking this diploma, found it exposed misconceptions he had held. “As a qualified academic, I thought I knew how learning takes place, but I discovered that learning is much more than I had thought, and I realised I was doing my students an injustice in the classroom,” he says.

For Professor Estelle Trengove, Head of the School of Electrical and Information Engineering, “the real game-changer was in recognising the need to create an environment in which students can learn the material you want them to learn, without blaming yourself or the students” when there are challenges.

Distinct from the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), which equips graduates for school-level teaching, the PGDipE(HE) is necessary, Dison says. “Higher education is its own field... While there may be overlap in pedagogic approaches, adult education principles are brought in and areas such as curriculum design are very different.”

She adds: “In the higher education space, the focus on transformation and debates around decolonisation necessitate the development of a responsive curriculum that takes account of how we understand student struggles at the tertiary level. We must consider not only access to university but also epistemic access – to ensure that students gain access to knowledge in a form that they can digest and critique and that recognises where they come from.”

Dison says another growing area of study is how assessment facilitates learning. Thus, the PGDipE(HE) emphasises pedagogically sound assessment design and the importance of ongoing feedback. Course graduates concur that this “reflective teaching” approach is vital.

Head of the Political Studies Department, Dr Siphiwe Dube, says: “Exposure to a deep analysis of assessment and critical thinking on curriculum development has helped me to think more creatively about my course offerings.” He says taking a microscopic look at his teaching practices and theories, in the context of a diverse group of colleagues, has helped him to better assess his teaching praxis.

Dr Oluwayomi Babatunde, senior lecturer in the School of Construction Economics and Management, says: “From design to lecture delivery, there is a much more conscious intent to align my course objectives with the learning outcomes I want students to achieve.” He has also learned to get real-time feedback from students, by deliberately creating opportunities for them to reflect on their progress, rather than waiting until formal assessments.

Sociology senior lecturer Dr Rajohane Matschedisho agrees: “I’m now able to contextualise difficulties I encounter in my teaching and that students face in their learning. As an academic, I’m thinking and writing much better as I have a meta-awareness of what I’m doing in terms of research and writing for publication.”
In 2017, an external evaluation of the PGDipE(HE) concluded that it “is building a critical mass of academics who value teaching as well as research and who are developing identities as teachers of their disciplines alongside their researcher identities”.

Prof. Crouch says: “We’ve looked at the subject-specific knowledge specialists and their ability to translate and communicate that expertise to students in a format they can understand, and that is what this professional development programme is all about... In my view, the Wits PGDip in Higher Education is the best in the country. That’s what I’ve been told.”

Postgraduate Diploma in Health Sciences Education (PGDipHSE)

“Health Sciences teaching is significantly different from other teaching, thus it requires a special lens,” says Shirra Moch, Education Development Coordinator responsible for the Postgraduate Diploma in Health Sciences Education (PGDipHSE).

She points out that, in addition to a theoretical knowledge base, a doctor or physiotherapist at a patient’s bedside must have clinical skills (for diagnosis and treatment) and technical proficiency (for example, with equipment ranging from stethoscopes to intravenous drips and the ability to analyse x-rays and blood test results).

The diploma aims to prepare participants for their teaching roles, and is open to all health science graduates with at least two years’ teaching experience. It attracts participants from within and outside Wits, including paramedics and nurses from various institutions.

Dr Dinah-Ruth Lulua, a clinical skills lecturer in the Unit for Undergraduate Medical Education, says the course “made me aware that, much like medicine, teaching is a skill or an art that has depth and needs to be viewed as such. It’s dangerous to assume teaching competence ... without educators having gone through any formal training process.”

Introduced in 2014, the diploma is offered full-time over one year or part-time over two years. It comprises four compulsory modules:

- Theories for Teaching and Learning;
- Teaching Methodologies for Health Science Education;
- Essentials of Assessment in Health Science Education; and
- Curriculum Design for Health Science Education.

Since its inception, 73 people have graduated with the PGDipHSE, with 17 participants currently enrolled.
Using a blended learning approach, two weeks of contact time per module are coupled with extensive online engagement. Moch explains the diploma is geared to inculcate a “sophisticated layer of understanding of learning in Health Sciences Education” because practitioners may lack confidence in the higher education arena, both as teachers and understanding its theoretical principles, or pedagogy.

In Health Sciences Education, assessment must necessarily include evaluation of technical skills and clinical reasoning abilities, with practical exams to evaluate what students do at a patient’s bedside. The course makes extensive use of both the Simulation Laboratory, which replicates clinical scenarios through the use of automated simulators (lifelike “robots” programmed to respond to various medical scenarios), and the eZone, known as e-Fundanathi, in the School of Therapeutic Sciences, which is a space dedicated to computer-assisted learning and teaching (see chapter 9).

For Dr Stuart Pattinson the diploma was completely transformative. He was a medical officer at Helen Joseph Hospital when he began the PGDipHSE; after completing it, he’s begun a new career as a clinical lecturer in Medical Education at Wits. He “loves understanding how people learn”, adding he has developed a particular interest in the scholarship of learning and teaching in the health sciences.

Moch finds diploma students have been uniformly enthusiastic about what they learn and says graduates demonstrate their continuing interest in the field by regularly attending faculty teaching and learning symposia. Many have redesigned their class offerings to better serve large classes learning practical skills.

Advanced Degrees in Health Sciences Education

The Masters in Health Sciences Education is a degree by course work and research report, for which the PGDipHSE is a gateway course. There have been two masters graduates. The eight students currently enrolled are expected to graduate in late 2019 or in 2020. There are also three candidates registered for a PhD in Health Sciences Education.
6.3 Data re academics

**Figure 1:** Overall headcount of permanent academic staff

![Bar chart showing the overall headcount of permanent academic staff from 2015 to 2019. The headcount range is from 1040 to 1128.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Headcount</th>
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</tr>
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<td>2019</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2:** Permanent academic staff by gender

![Bar chart showing the permanent academic staff by gender from 2015 to 2019. The female headcount range is from 506 to 560, and the male headcount range is from 567 to 568.]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>556</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>568</td>
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Figure 3: Permanent academic staff by race

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<td>349</td>
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<td>62</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>581</td>
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</table>

Figure 4: Permanent academic staff by rank

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<th>Associate Professor</th>
<th>Senior Lecturer</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
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<td>414</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
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</table>
**Figure 5:** Professors by race

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<th>INDIAN</th>
<th>WHITE</th>
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</table>

**Figure 6:** Professors by gender

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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
*Non-permanent academics include casual staff, employees, honorary staff, post-doc fellows, sessional and visiting staff.
Figure 9: Permanent academic staff with PhDs by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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6.4 Award-winning university teachers

National Awards

2018: Dr Susan Harrop-Allin – a senior lecturer in the Music division of the School of Arts, she received a national teaching and learning award from the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of South Africa (HELTASA) in December 2018.

The award acknowledges academics who have made significant contributions to university teaching and learning and shared their philosophy, insights and innovative ideas across the sector.

Harrop-Allin is committed to social transformation through the arts. In her professional capacity as a teacher trainer and project manager, she has initiated numerous music development projects to build social cohesion in diverse communities in South Africa. She has taught and developed courses in eight areas of music, the arts and education. She believes excellent teaching in higher education is, firstly, teaching that is research led and theoretically grounded. It is teaching that is informed by reflective practice and investigates the nature of student learning and domain-specific knowledge. Primarily, excellent teaching is student-focused.

At the time of winning the award, Harrop-Allin said her teaching "underscores the significance of Community Music and Music Education as valued disciplines within Music and the Wits School of Arts" and that it highlighted the importance of "arts community engagement programmes as models of curriculum transformation in the current decolonisation context. I am particularly honoured that my teaching methodologies and curriculum design have been characterised by my peers as innovative and precedent-setting in South African higher education."

Dr Richard Klein – an undergraduate course coordinator for Computer Science at School of Computer Science and Applied Mathematics, he received the Excellent Instructor prize in the Huawei ICT Skills Competition

Meghan Botes – Nursing Education Excellence Award

2017: Dr Sue Armstrong – awarded the National Nursing Education Leadership award in recognition of her lifelong contribution to the development of nursing education and nurse educators through her innovation, energy and leadership

2016: Lizelle Crous – Nursing Education Excellence Award (for an educator of less than five years) for introducing blended learning, writing a pilot module to convince other educators of its value, and facilitating capacity to incorporate blended learning as a teaching strategy
Professor Jyoti Mistry, of the Film & Television division of the School of Arts in the Humanities Faculty - a CILECT Teaching Award (CILECT, Centre International de Liaison des Ecoles de Cinéma et de Télévision is The International Association of Film and Television Schools).

2015: Professor Sandy van Vuuren – the Pharmacy Academy’s Most Distinguished Teacher of the Year award

Vice-Chancellor’s Awards for Teaching and Learning

2019: Dr Petro Jansen van Vuuren - lecturer and postgraduate supervisor in the Drama for Life PhD programme in the Wits School of Arts for shaping and coordinating the programme from 2017 to 2019. She also won the 2019 Faculty of Humanities Teaching Award for leading the development of the PhD short course, Preparing for Doctoral study in the Arts.
Dr Alex van den Heever and Dr Murray Cairns from the School of Governance won the team award for pioneering the school’s high-quality online education. The duo negotiated a partnership with the Wits Film and Television department to ensure the fully online postgraduate diploma in public development management has top quality video recordings. They also ensured academic staff’s participation, and reviewed the entire online offering themselves to ensure it was of the highest quality and met the standards of the Centre for Higher Education and Training.

2018: Dr Susan Harrop-Allin – Music lecturer
The team award went to five academics in the School of Architecture and Planning who are passionate about teaching architectural design to first-year students. The team uses a collaborative teaching approach based on collectivist philosophies drawn from Indigenous Knowledge Practices.

2017: Dr Ufuoma Akpojivi – postgraduate coordinator in the Department of Media Studies, was recognised for his significant contribution towards enabling student development and eFundanathi team growth and for having significantly exceeded the University’s average assessment for teaching and learning.

The eFundanathi team of Dr Paula Barnard-Ashton, Dr Janine van der Linde, Lebo Bogoshi and Phiwe Dlamini, based in the School of Therapeutic Sciences (see chapter 9), won the team award for pioneering work that has had a major impact on teaching and learning. The team has taken responsibility for orientating first-year undergraduate and postgraduate students in the University’s online platforms in order to ensure basic digital literacy among students. They train staff and students in the use and integration of blended online learning strategies and tools.

2016: Dr Peace Kiguwa – a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Humanities, who works as an independent researcher on two joint projects funded by the Ford Foundation: Young Women’s Leadership in Higher Education, and Destabilising Heteronormative Practice within Higher Education (funded by Aid International). She also serves as research con
consultant for the Poetso Music Project, an NGO-based venture to rehabilitate male prisoners through music.

Dr Nicky Falkof, Professor Mehita Iqani, Dr Dina Ligagaz, Dr Cobus van Staden, Dr Ufuoma Akpojivi, Dr Iginio Gagliardone and Dr Glenda Daniels from the Department of Media Studies – for demonstrating a deep capacity for team work and inclusive decision-making across the three years of their undergraduate curriculum, which had a significant impact on throughput rates. The pass rate for the first-year course Media and Society increased from 67.4% in 2014 to 90.4% in 2015 as a result of innovations in course design, teaching schedule and use of e-learning books.

2015: The Health Systems Dynamics (HSD) Team in the Biomedical Engineering Research Group in the School of Electrical and Information Engineering - for developing practical approaches to introduce Systems Dynamics into medical education in a manner well suited to the needs and educational background of Health Science students.

Faculty of Health Sciences Awards for Teaching Excellence

2018: Dr Pierre Kondiah – awarded for excellence in mentoring

2016: Dr Sue Armstrong (Nursing Education) – Phillip Tobias and Convocation Distinguished Teacher’s Awards

Juliana Freeme (Occupational Therapy) and Muhammed Vally – excellence in mentoring

2015: Julie Jay (Occupational Therapy) – Phillip Tobias and Convocation Distinguished Teacher’s Awards

Professor Sandy van Vuuren, Dr Sue Armstrong (Nursing Education), Matty van Niekerk (Occupational Therapy), Meghan Botes (Nursing Education) - excellence in mentoring

Faculty of Humanities Teaching and Learning Awards

2018: Dr Colette Gordon – Teaching Excellence at the Undergraduate Level

Dr Prinisha Badassy – Teaching Excellence at the Undergraduate Level
2017: Dr Susan Harrop-Allin – Teaching Excellence at the Undergraduate Level

Dr Ufuoma Akpojivi – Teaching Excellence at the Undergraduate Level

Dinesh Balliah – Teaching Excellence at the Postgraduate Level

2016: Dr Lee Rusznyak – Teaching Excellence at the Undergraduate Level – for her sustained, thoughtful and reflexive approach to teaching and research into teaching and learning

Dr Patrick Bamby – Teaching Excellence at the Undergraduate Level – for his novel approach and work towards making teacher education relevant to the South African context.

Professor Tommaso Milani – Teaching Excellence at the Postgraduate Level

Dr Peace Kiguwa – Teaching Excellence at the Postgraduate Level

Professor Mehita Iqani, Dr Nicky Falkof, Dr Dina Ligagaz, Dr Glenda Daniels, Dr Cobus van Staden, Dr Ufuoma Akpojivi and Dr Iginio Gagliardone of Media Studies – Team Teaching Award

Dr Lindelwa Dalamba, Dr Marie Jorritsma, Dr Donato Somma and Dr Grant Olwage – Team Teaching Award for their fourth-year BMus Music Criticism course

Faculty of Science Distinguished Teachers’ Awards

2017: Kelsey Glennon – Convocation Distinguished Teacher’s Individual Award

2015: Michael Mitchley – Convocation Distinguished Teacher’s Individual Award
Supervisor and Tutor Awards

2019: Dr Kambidima Wotela – outstanding contribution to postgraduate supervision in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management

Professor Ling Cheng – outstanding contribution to postgraduate supervision in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment

Professor Shabir Ahmed Madhi – outstanding contribution to postgraduate supervision in the Faculty of Health Sciences

Professor Katijah Khoza-Shangase – outstanding contribution to postgraduate supervision in the Faculty of Humanities

Dr Judah P Makonye – outstanding contribution to postgraduate supervision in the Faculty of Humanities

2017: Professor Charles de Koning – the Samuel Goodman Memorial Medal for Excellence in Postgraduate Supervision in the Faculty of Science

Mark Durrheim – PSYBERGATE Computer Science Alumni Prize for the Best Student Tutor of undergraduate students

Cindy Carvalho (MSc) and Simphiwe Simelane (PhD) – Best Student MSc and PhD Tutors in Computational and Applied Mathematics

Amy Naicker – the Penny Huddle Memorial Award for a postgraduate student who has shown exceptional ability as a tutor and teaching assistant in the School of Chemistry
Bridget Mutuma and Malitsatsi Mnguni – the Penny Huddle Memorial Award for postgraduate student who has shown exceptional ability as a teaching assistant in the first-year undergraduate laboratory in the School of Chemistry, chosen by a survey of first-year students

2016: Professor Caroline T Tiemessen – top postgraduate supervisor in the Faculty of Health Sciences

Professor Paul Alagidede – best postgraduate supervisor in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management

Professor Ivan Hofsajer – best postgraduate supervisor in the Faculty Engineering and the Built Environment

Professor Saraladevi Naicker – best postgraduate supervisor in the Faculty of Health Sciences

Professor Edward Witowski – best postgraduate supervisor in the Faculty of Science

Professor Paul Alagidede
Grant Donson’s business bloomed after doing a short course through Wits Plus.

Picture: @sourcephotos44
7 ENABLING FLEXIBLE AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING

7.1 Wits Plus – Part-time Studies

Wits Plus was initially formed as a part-time studies opportunity for people who wished to enrol for BA and BCom degrees.

The unit, that is, the Centre for Part-time Studies and Continuing Education, was formed about 20 years ago, with Adjunct Prof Kathy Munro as its first Director. It was placed in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management for management reasons.

When Prof Munro retired in 2013/14, Dr Johan Swanepoel became the second Director of Wits Plus. He served until the end of 2018 when he left to take up a position at the University of Stellenbosch.

The Senior Executive Team (SET) at Wits then appointed Prof Beatrys Lacquet as the Acting Director for 2019.

During 2014/5, Prof Andrew Crouch, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic, expanded the role of Wits Plus and changed the reporting lines. The Director of Wits Plus now reports directly to the DVC Academic’s Office. Since then, the unit has expanded its suite of offerings and now offers courses across the faculties.

When electrical engineer Professor Beatrys Lacquet took over as Acting Director of the Wits Plus Centre, in February 2019, she elected to treat the new position scientifically. Her résumé includes many portfolios, including that of Dean of Engineering, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Knowledge and Information Management, Infrastructure and Operations, where she proved her mettle as an organiser. This – and her ability to laugh – keeps her sane as she tackles the task of taking this vital Wits learning centre to greater heights.

So what is Wits Plus? On a physical level, it is an administrative hub on West Campus which specialises in the management of predominantly part-time programmes. Unsuspecting evening visitors to West Campus might be taken aback by the traffic jams of large numbers of students arriving and leaving for their classes at Wits Plus; these part-time programmes are offered after hours and on Saturday mornings.

As a concept, they are not new: part-time studies were introduced at Wits some 20 years ago, by the then Dean of Commerce, Law and Management, Kathy Munro.
Today a degree offered through Wits Plus is punted as “an investment in yourself and your success in life” and programmes include one that combines a commerce major (HR/Management/Marketing) from the Bachelor of Commerce disciplines with a Social Sciences Bachelor of Arts major, to become the BA for the World of Work.

Besides the standard BA and BCom degrees, there is also the option of doing a BA or BCom degree with Law as one of the majors instead of another BA or BCom course. Wits Plus also offers the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), a professional high school teaching qualification for applicants with a Bachelor’s degree with teaching subjects. The certificate takes two years to complete and includes blocks of practical teaching experience for a few weeks each year.

Other offerings include an Honours in Psychology, a BSc Computer Science and a BSc Engineering with options of all the disciplines: Aeronautical, Chemical, Civil, Electrical, Industrial, Mechanical, Metallurgy, and Mining.

The Graduate Entry Medical Programme (GEMP) aims to increase the number of medical graduates and allows entry into the third year of the MBChB medical degree, so providing suitable candidates the opportunity to complete the undergraduate medical degree in four years.

GEMP candidates have to be meet certain minimum requirements, which include having an undergraduate degree with an average of at least 60% over the final two completed years of study. They also have to write an entrance exam, the Wits Additional Placement Test (WAFT). Those who rate tops are invited to register for GEMP, on an “occasional student” basis – that is, for non-degree purposes.

Wits Plus also prepares candidates for the Chartered Secretaries Southern Africa (CSSA) Board Exam. CCSA is an international professional qualifying body and has given full accreditation to the Wits Plus certificates in Corporate Governance and Administration. There are three certificate levels – introductory, intermediate and advanced – and students have to pass all three to write the Board exam.

An innovation helping many Wits students is that Wits Plus offers the opportunity for some of those enrolled in full-time programmes to repeat key courses without it affecting progression in their degrees. Prof Lacquet explains: “Say a student enrols for the first year of an Engineering degree and fails Chemistry 101 in the first semester. They can only redo it the next year and can’t progress in their degree, which brings huge complications. With Wits Plus, that same course is provided for the student in the second semester in the evenings and after hours, so they can catch up.” Students can thus earn credits for all the courses they pass that year, whether they take them full-time or part-time.

Prof Lacquet’s priority with Wits Plus is to have more online offerings. Keeping up with trends serves not only to keep Wits’ offerings relevant, it also addresses students’ priorities.
Wits Plus students who complete their studies successfully qualify for a full Wits degree. Should they meet the same entry requirements as fulltime students, they are able to apply for postgraduate studies. This is made possible by the following quality assurance processes:

• All Wits Plus lecturers are appointed by the academic schools’ departments;
• Wits Plus students have to meet the same outcomes as fulltime students in order to graduate; and
• Wits Plus students write the same examinations as fulltime students, and in many cases the same semester tests.

Prof Lacquet says the teaching and learning at Wits Plus is just one aspect of what it provides. Ultimately “it becomes a service to the community that will empower students to earn their own keep and to do better in their jobs,” she says.
7.2 Short courses – sharing academic knowledge with working people

Wits offers over 1 200 short courses through various university structures, including Wits Enterprise, Wits Plus and a number of academic units, including Schools and Centres.

Wits Enterprise is a private company wholly owned by the University that is billed as “a one-stop shop for excellence in short-course delivery”. It even tailor-makes courses to meet specific requirements such as multidisciplinary programmes for the aeronautical, nuclear and mining industries.

One of its courses is the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Management Development Programme, created by Wits in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry and Unisa’s School of Business Leadership. The course is aimed at helping middle management achieve their B-BBEE goals and is designed to standardise knowledge and professionalise the industry. The course can be fast-tracked over three months, with five on-campus contact days, or be completed over eight months with eight contact days.

This is one example of how short courses means different things to different people. Some run over a year and some for just two days. Either way, implicit in the description is that a short course is not for academic credit. While some require only attendance, others require demonstration of competence through formal assessment tasks. The wide range of short courses on offer at Wits provide opportunities to thousands of adult learners every year to strengthen their skills, update their knowledge or study something new without the time and cost commitments that go with studying for a degree.

The Wits School of Governance offers courses in management areas. Examples include Community Development Management, Programme and Project Management, Municipal Financial Reporting, Governance and Ethics for Union Leaders, and Crime Prevention Management.

Trevor Fowler, Visiting Adjunct Professor and Director of Executive Education at the Wits School of Governance, says the value of its structured short courses is to “enable state or other organisations to address their governance challenges in meeting their obligations to society”.

The short courses train their staff to understand their goals and challenges, and so they learn to find solutions, says Fowler.

The School’s short courses are specifically tailored to the organisation’s needs and delivered through block release. “The courses are offered in a manner that optimises peer learning by skilled academics who have both academic and practical knowledge. The outcome of the course will be students who are assessed as competent in understanding the required concepts and its implementation,” he says.
GEMP candidates have to meet certain minimum requirements, which include having an undergraduate degree with an average of at least 60% over the final two completed years of study. They also have to write an entrance exam, the Wits Additional Placement Test (WAFT). Those who rate tops are invited to register for GEMP, on an “occasional student” basis – that is, for non-degree purposes.

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Prof. Lacquet’s priority with Wits Plus is to have more online offerings. Keeping up with trends serves not only to keep Wits’ offerings relevant, it also addresses students’ priorities. She says the teaching and learning at Wits Plus is just one aspect of what it provides. Ultimately “it becomes a service to the community that will empower students to earn their own keep and to do better in their jobs”.

Prof. Lacquet says short courses link the corporate world with academia in ways that hadn’t been properly articulated until now.

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**Short course success story: Flowers by Grant Donson**

Thanks to the Wits Plus Business Management Essentials short course, Grant Donson’s business is thriving.

He credits the course, which he finished in November 2018, for his business, Flowers by Grant Donson, quadrupling its year-on-year turnover in the first six months of 2019; and an expanding client list that now includes large corporates. His pop-up shop next to the reception desk at a Rosebank, Johannesburg gym for 10 days leading up to Valentine’s Day was one of his innovative marketing plans that paid off. “I got new clients,” he says.

He says the Wits course taught him essentials such as how to analyse the business environment and use it to conceptualise a long-term competitive strategy, compile his first financial statements, form networks with other small businesses that he now collaborates with on large projects, and create a marketing and social media strategy with regular posts on his Instagram account, flow- ers_bygrantdonson.
She cautions that the University should not be too purist about the purpose of a short course. “In the end,” she says, “we need to serve the public good, which is not always in maintaining a super-managed degree programme. If we are out there in the public domain, we share our expertise with people, which they need for the technology know-how or job advancement we can give them.

“We found there are some individuals in industry who haven’t studied for a long time, or haven’t studied this focus. What we’re doing with the short courses is to ‘check them out’. This enables them to be confident (or to realise their lack of interest or commitment). In other words, if you do a short course, you don’t have to have the super-duper entry requirements that you would for a degree programme. The short course is a way of proving to yourself that you are capable of doing this.”

Short courses go through a rigorous quality-assurance process before being recorded on the University’s short-course system, which generates official Wits certificates.

### 7.3 Online programmes – Transcending the campus

The push for more online offerings started with the approval of the Learning and Teaching Plan 2015 – 2019. Blended learning was adopted as integral to this plan, but took a long time to find traction within the University.

In 2015, the University signed an agreement between Wits Plus and a company called LRMG to transition some of its ”most in demand” short courses online.

LRMG developed the “witsdigitalcampus” platform and has since launched 21 online Wits short courses, with a total registration number of more than 4300.

During August 2015, Wits joined forces with EdX, an online platform for Massive Open Online Courses known as MOOCS, which are free online courses available to anyone.

Now Wits has become the only African partner for the development and launching of MOOOCs and has since developed and launched 10 MOOOCs. A further two will be launched at the end of 2019. In total, more than 74000 learners have registered for the Wits MOOOCs.

The University has gained significant experience from these projects in the development of infrastructure, expertise as well as human capacity development for online teaching.
During 2016, the university engaged a partner (at first the American company, Academic Partnerships, and now Higher Education Partners-South Africa, known as HEPA) to assist in the development of fully online programmes.

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) has accredited two of the three formal programmes that are live. These online activities have all been coordinated and supported through the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic, Prof Andrew Crouch.

Since 2018 Wits has offered courses online that allow students to earn credits towards a degree. These include courses that form part of Postgraduate Diplomas in Business Administration, Governance and Digital Business.

"The bouquet of online programmes is growing," says Prof Lacquet. "Many others now evolving are mostly undergraduate programmes, so they include a BComm, a BSc in data science, and a BEngSc (not the Bsc Eng which is a professional engineering degree). With the BEngSc, students can do the first two years of the degree part time and online. Thereafter, they can come complete the degree full time; hopefully their company will pay their fees."

Staff-wise, the initiative to develop online programmes is backed up with a project manager, a steering committee and working groups.

Prof Lacquet speaks of an upskilling diploma for nurses, as well as an online PGDip in Accountancy, which prepares candidates for the board exam, in the near future. To say nothing of Law courses. And Education courses. She has plans to put the fourth year of the BEd online, because she deems it to be a bit like a “finishing school”, and many students start working in their fourth year anyway.

The Wits brand is important when choosing an online course, she says, speaking about how the internet is full of all kinds of online programmes, which make various promises and have a variety of price tags.

Also in the online space, Prof Lacquet is working with Humanities in fields such as journalism: they’re putting a few of their courses, typically at the Honours level, online, so that they can reach into the rest of Africa and change the mode of delivery from full contact to fully online, should they wish to.

The process for offering a course online is not complicated. "All we need to show is that the assessments are equivalent," Prof Lacquet explains. "What is nice with this is that we try to make it definite that you can interchange.

"Because if you are a working person and you’re doing your courses and then suddenly your company sends you to Timbuktu, all you need to ask is whether your new office has an internet connection, and then you have no problem!

"Fifteen years from now," Prof Lacquet predicts, "Wits will not exist as we know it, not in its teaching structures, not in the need for students to be on campus."
7.4 Blended Learning – Enhancing education with technology

Blended learning is one of the buzzwords at Wits.

It is one of the six priority areas that the University’s Learning and Teaching Plan 2015-2019 identifies as being crucial to achieving the relevant aspirations of the Wits Vision 2022 Strategic Framework.

“Wits is firmly committed to becoming an ‘IT savvy’ university and in order to do so needs actively to promote eLearning to support 21st-century learning and teaching environments,” states the plan, which refers to “anytime, anywhere, using any device’ learning and teaching”.

In turn, the Wits Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy of May 2018 states: “Blended learning presents opportunities to re-imagine the ICT landscape of the university.” But the term is not only in the documents; it is also in conversations. Talk about teaching and learning to any manager, in any department and faculty, and “blended learning” comes up repeatedly.

So what exactly is it?

Gerrit Wissing, Deputy Director of the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development (CLTD) and Head of Teaching Development at Wits, says: “Blended learning has many, many, many, many definitions. The simple definition I use is that it’s a mixture of face-to-face and online learning situations. I won’t discuss specific percentages because it varies from case to case. To me blended learning is not an objective; it’s a consequence.” Surprisingly, he is not a fan of the label. “Actually I don’t like using the term. I prefer just talking about learning because learning, whether it’s on a computer or whatever, the construct that forms in the mind is not different.

“When we work with lecturers we don’t say, ‘We’re going to blend your course for you’; we say, ‘We’re going to develop a course for you’. And at some stage we make a decision about which technology will suit the learning that has to occur.

“It’s the learning that needs to occur that determines the technology you’re going to use. So we don’t say ‘we’re going to develop a course that works on mobile devices’, because not everything works on mobile devices. We never have technology as a focus; we have learning as a focus.”

Wissing’s description exactly matches the one priority for blended learning in the Wits Learning and Teaching Plan 2015-2019: to ensure technology is used to support, as opposed to dictate, learning and teaching.
He might not be punting the term “blended learning” but he is fully committed to the use of technology as a tool for teaching.

“In 2019 to be in a classroom and not be using technology is, I almost want to say it’s not an option. It should just be the way in which we do business. We have a specific task that needs to be done and we find whatever technology works best to do it,” he says. Wissing explains there is a big difference between distance learning, which happens through a correspondence university, and “learning at a distance”, that is, away from the classroom, which is where a lot of learning has always taken place.

“Wits is a contact university so we are not going to replace the contact sessions with online sessions; we’re using the technology to support students when they are not in their lectures. A lot of the learning that happens at the university doesn’t happen in the classroom; you go to lectures and then you go home and study and do assignments.”

It is in this space, away from the lecture hall, that the Learning Management System (LMS) – an integrated online educational application – can support students, and enable them to communicate with each other and the lecturer.

Wits has been using the LMS Sakai since 2010. Statistics dated May 2018 reveal between 1 5000 and 45 000 average daily logins to Sakai, with 50% to 60% of staff using it “in one form or another”.

Sakai offers communication over distance and that’s how it needs to be used. It can be used to write tests, access marks, plan interactive learning engagements, and “we have built in some capacity for webinar software (virtual real-time classrooms where people log in to a central space and everybody can talk to each other). And we can make conversations between the students and lecturer possible, can have a discussion board, and it doesn’t have to be in real time.”

Initially there were problems with the system, but improvements started before Wissing arrived at Wits in mid-2017. “A substantial number of people say they won’t use Sakai because it doesn’t work, but it does in fact work – the Centre took ownership of the management of Sakai and we have stabilised it.”

That Sakai is not being used to its full potential niggles Wissing. “Sakai is growing.” he says, but worries that many “might not be using it well, might just be uploading documents so their students can download them”, when a better way of distribution would be on a memory stick as it doesn’t involve using the internet.

Wits’s next focus relating to digital teaching and learning is the smart classroom project. “We have identified two venues, one flat floor and one auditorium, and we’re equipping them with state-of-the-art technology,” he says.
The flat-floor venue is in Gate House on East Campus, which seats about 80. It will have touch screens plus technology for lecture capturing (recording, capturing and storing it so that students can access it later). “If the subject is content heavy it will work; if you record a project-based assignment it might not work,” Wissing says. Ever mindful of the need to place learning foremost, he cautions that “there are often better ways (of learning) than recording stuff and relooking at the recording over and over and over. A lot of learning happens when students take ownership of the learning, when they’ve got to go and find the materials and construct knowledge.”

The other smart classroom venue is a 300-seat auditorium in the Science Stadium on West Campus. “The technology is a little bit different because in a flat-floor space you can move stuff around and be a little more interactive; in an auditorium the seats are often fixed to the floor,” Wissing says. This venue will have large touch screens, essentially TV screens that are like big iPads, to which students can connect from their phones via wireless router.

“There’s a functionality on most smartphones now where you can mirror your screen to another device, so students can go search stuff on the internet and share it to the group. So you can flip the whole dynamic of the classroom away from just the lecturer standing and talking to students,” says Wissing.

“At the moment what we have in classrooms is blackboards and chalk and data projectors that connect with the lecturer’s laptop to the projector fixed to the roof, and then project whatever is on the computer to a screen in front of the class, basically magnifying it. It doesn’t improve the learning interaction at all. It just improves the visibility of it.”

The CLTD has a big role to play in what Wissing calls “the blended learning conversation”.

“Our job is to get the lecturers to understand that you don’t walk into a classroom and start talking. You walk into a classroom and set up an expectation and ask the students to use the technology that’s available to start constructing their own knowledge.

“We have learning programmes and lecturers come to us and we show them about curriculum development and using technology in the curriculum ...

“We look at what it is the students have to learn and then we plan learning interactions for them. And we say, ‘this little bit the students can do in class and this little bit the students can do on their own when they are away – watch videos, do quizzes, do assignments’.

“The prevalent belief is that students cannot learn unless there is a lecturer in front of them. That is entirely untrue and so we need to challenge that belief.”
Average daily logins to the Wits-e service (the LMS) per month

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Annual increase of Wits-e users

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Daily average new Wits-e users

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</tr>
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<td>May</td>
<td>116</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>54</td>
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<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>143</td>
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<tr>
<td>August</td>
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<td>September</td>
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<td>November</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
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</table>
Associate Professor Pamela Nichols who is director of the Writing Centre at the Wartenweiler Library.

Image: Nico Baird

CHAPTER 8
8.1 Wits Writing Programme – Embedding critical thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRITING INTENSIVE COURSES</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019 (figures at mid year)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Intensive Courses</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Science</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and the Built Environment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce, Law and Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL 29</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Fellow</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Intensive Students</td>
<td>5244</td>
<td>7000+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2018, thanks to seed money from the government’s University Capacity Development Grant, Wits was the first university in South Africa to formalise an internationally recognised way of teaching writing within disciplines known as Writing Intensive (WI). These courses form the Wits Writing Programme, directed by Associate Professor Pamela Nichols, who is both the Director of the Wits Writing Centre and the head of Writing and Learning at the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development.

Prof. Nichols and her colleague in Science, Professor Liz Brenner, have run workshops at nearly every university across the country for university teachers to adapt existing courses to make them WI. However, this is the first time that WI teaching has been formalised at a South African university through a Writing Board of the Faculties, required criteria, supporting Writing Fellow tutors and developing faculty support structures. As the figures for 2018 and 2019 show, the programme is set to expand.
Prof. Nichols explains that the designation “Writing Intensive” does not mean a course in which students write intensively, but rather one that has been redesigned around assignments, rather than content coverage, and to develop the critical thinking outcomes of a particular course.

Writing is understood as thinking and so includes reading, planning, talking, learning to understand, and thinking more broadly within a discipline. To make a course WI, therefore, means to surface what constitutes effective writing and thinking and its communication, and then teaching this discipline-specific facility through extensive practice. A successful WI course is thus not about short-term rote learning, but rather about learning to think, to do and to play within a discipline. Its effects, if successful, are about learning to learn.

Prof. Nichols uses the example of Science Introduction to Life Sciences, a common large enrolment course, to demonstrate the operation of WI teaching. What are some of the critical thinking skills this course needs to teach? The discipline specialists have to answer that question, but it could, for example, be developing curiosity and habits of inquiry, as well as the ability to design effective experiments to answer specific research questions.

Such teaching demands a building up of skills, of ways to enable students to discover meaning, and a process of constant feedback to students. This is achieved by the addition of Writing Fellow tutors to WI courses, and the employment of both formal (marked, high-stakes) and informal (unmarked, low-stakes) writing activities.

How does a course become Writing Intensive? This type of teaching demands more work and a greater time commitment from the lecturer, so it is desirable that only the lecturers who are attracted to the Wits Writing Programme and the new pedagogy apply to make their course WI. These self-selected lecturers then attend a workshop, currently held three times a year, which sets out the principles of WI pedagogy and ideas and strategies to adapt existing courses to teach the identified critical thinking outcomes.
Then following the WWP handbook’s description of the current 10 criteria for WI courses – including the requirements to ask open-ended questions, incorporate opportunities for revision, and to spread the writing across the whole course – the lecturers submit their WI course proposal, with sample activities and supporting material, to the Writing Board of the Faculties.

The board is composed of 15 members of the academic staff, including the heads of the two other writing centres and the special adviser on Language Policy, and is chaired by the Assistant Dean for Teaching and Learning in Science, Prof. Brenner. It occupies a central role in promoting WI teaching across the University.

If the Writing Board of the Faculties recognises the course as WI, funding for Writing Fellow (WF) tutors is allocated, so bringing the student-to-tutor ratio down to a number that will allow both active learning and extensive feedback. Writing Fellow postgraduate tutors are then selected, trained and given a working resource book of strategies to support the writing process of their students. Both WI lecturers and WF tutors have access to the Writing Library in the Wits Writing Centre, which has a significant and growing number of books on argument, and on research and writing within the disciplines.

As the course runs, WI lecturers and WF tutors meet weekly to discuss the students’ learning and think of ways to be more responsive to their needs. Together they introduce students to the pleasures of problem-solving within disciplines, as well as identifying where the students need extra help. At the same time, the WFs have the opportunity to see the WI lecturer’s thinking and problem-solving within the course as it unfolds.

“The work has mostly developed my ideas for teaching. I especially love the way the activities are structured to convey particular aspects of writing and thinking. Some are such “fun” that the students forget they are in class, and a writing one. For example, we did this exercise with mapping, which we then related to descriptive writing. The students were so excited and engaged with the work it seemed there was too little time […] I think the programme is a much-needed intervention. After a couple of semesters tutoring with ADU, and a few more of teaching in my department, I do not think its value can be overstated. I have been astounded by brilliant writing from students in departments from which I never thought such writing could emerge. But I have also been struck by the amount of work that needs to be done to get some students to a level where they can express themselves coherently. Of course, this would not be a problem if people were allowed to articulate their thoughts in whatever medium they are comfortable with, but as it does not seem likely that the system would adjust to that level any time soon, the best that can be offered is a well-planned programme that enables them to harness the best of this mode of thinking and writing. (Femi Eromosele, WF, 2019)
In this sense the experience of working as a WF is enriching and instructive for the postgraduate student as a potential future lecturer.

The benefits of the Wits Writing Programme are multiple and inter-related. They include: the extensive discussions about pedagogy among staff in different disciplines; the development of teaching ideas archived in each submission; the growth of a community of writing teachers and tutors across the University; the development of an engaged postgraduate culture, enhanced by the ability of WFs to move between disciplines; and the promotion of better writing among students, tutors and staff.

Because of the engagement that the programme fosters, it has been identified as occupying an important place in the ongoing process of decolonising curricula. The department of Anthropology for example, has made all its courses WI as a response to the need to develop a decolonial pedagogy.

Some reflections on WI courses, collected June 2019

The community of practice created by the Wits Writing Programme was evident in the participative internal indaba held in February, which included WF panels, discussions about professional writing and academic writing, and assessment of WI courses. It is also evident in the several research projects currently being conducted by WI lecturers within Humanities and Health Sciences to measure the impact of these courses. In 2019 evidence of impact needs to be systematically collected, but the initial results are encouraging, and include, for example, the observation from Science of a significant improvement in marks, and from the external examiner of a Masters in Cultural Policy and Arts Management course that there has been a significant improvement in the students’ ability to construct arguments.

“I will most certainly run this as a WI course next year! It really is the only way, as I see it, to develop students’ writing, even if the results are not always immediate. (Dr Karl Van Wyk, WI lecturer and course co-ordinator, for the common first-year course in EBE, comprising over 1 200 students)”

In terms of upscaling, in addition to the Writing Library and Wits Writing Programme workshops held at the Wits Writing Centre, Writing Academies are being established within each faculty, supplied with textual and online resources, as well as faculty-specific workshops and courses for WFs to develop their own writing and research. The Wits Writing Programme is thus developing as a systemic, disciplinary response to the need to develop more effective writing across the University.
Recognised WI courses at Wits

**HUMANITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<td>WSOA7027A</td>
<td>Cultural Policy and Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>WSOA714A</td>
<td>Cultural Policy and Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRAA1009</td>
<td>Concepts in Theatre &amp; Performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDLL3027</td>
<td>SASL Poetry and Storytelling</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENGL2003</td>
<td>Theatre of Blood: Revenge Drama</td>
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<td>ENGL2003</td>
<td>The Invention of Love</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENGL2003</td>
<td>Postcolonial Crossings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANTH2007</td>
<td>Youth and Nationhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCW 1005</td>
<td>Health and Wellbeing</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOCW 1005</td>
<td>People in their Environment and Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCW3005</td>
<td>Research Methods</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOCW7015</td>
<td>Programme Design and Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCW4003</td>
<td>Social Work Theory and Practice-Research Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPPA 1004</td>
<td>Speech Pathology and Audiology 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPPA 2003</td>
<td>Speech &amp; Language Pathology 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC 3078</td>
<td>History III Apartheid, Resistance and Biographies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC 1275A</td>
<td>Revolutions (French and Haitian Revolution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC 2226</td>
<td>History of the USA: from Columbus to the Black Panthers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC 1283</td>
<td>Resource and Environmental Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC 1248A</td>
<td>An Introduction to the Psychological Theories of Learning and Development and their Implications for Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC 3077</td>
<td>Assessment III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUC 3077</td>
<td>Pedagogy III</td>
</tr>
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<td>EDUC 3077</td>
<td>Contested Curriculum III</td>
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**SCIENCE**

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<tr>
<td>MCBG2032</td>
<td>Molecular &amp; Cell Biology IIB Concepts,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIOL1000A</td>
<td>and MCBG1000 Introductory Life Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(GEOL1000A)</td>
<td>Foundations of Science Writing &amp; Thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEOG100A/1003A</td>
<td>Geography 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Engineering and the Built Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUQS 1007/ARPL1015/ARPL1013</td>
<td>Critical Thinking and Communication Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Joburg in Text; Afro-futurism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.2 Cross-disciplinary and School-based Writing Centres – Putting it into practice

The Wits Writing Centre is “both about writing and about much more than writing” says Prof. Nichols, who works from the cross-disciplinary Centre on the ground floor of the Wartenweiler Library on East Campus.

The Wits Writing Centre was one of the first in South Africa, running informally from 1997 and receiving central funding from 2000. It has three permanent members of staff and up to 25 trained senior students from different disciplines. The Centre works on several levels:

- One-to-one writing consultations, available to all Wits students and staff;
- Workshops, short courses and consultations; establishing self-sustaining writing groups for staff and students; writing retreats to develop the writing component of existing courses, to develop argument in academic writing, and sometimes to work on creative writing; and running the writing component of the Targeting Talent Programme for school pupils (grades 10-12);
· Research into the teaching of writing;
· Promotion of a culture of writing and reading through writers’ evenings, book launches and public workshops related to community issues; and
· Promotion of student culture through the encouragement of student-led initiatives focused on advancing writing skills.

The Centre is distinctive among South African writing centres for its focus on public events, and for the inclusion of creative writing. It has co-organised four literary festivals, participated in judging literary prizes, (Prof. Nichols has chaired the panel of judges for the Jacana Literary prize for three years), supported the development of 16 award-winning writers from its ranks, as well as hosted many book launches and literary discussions each year.

The heart of the Wits Writing Centre method is the disciplined listening involved in the one-to-one consultation.

“Consultants are trained in bringing tacit knowledge to awareness and then building on that tacit knowledge through the development of argument,” explains Prof Nichols. In a 1998 article, she explained the process in detail: “Clients come with drafts or just ideas, sit next to the consultant and have to lead the discussion. The consultant asks questions about the process of the client’s draft, helps the client to find and communicate her thought, and enables the client eventually to internalise the questions of a reader so that the client becomes independent.” The Wits Writing Centre today demonstrates that practice in action.

Innovations during the last five years include the Developing Writers Programme, which allows a student to sign up for a series of five or 10 sessions with the same writing consultant. The first and last consultation usually involves the supervisor, and so ensures that the consultant and client are working under the supervisor’s guidance.

Another innovation is the Consultant Development Programme, which employs the weekly group meetings to support and mentor the professional development of the postgraduate writing consultants at the Centre. This ranges from their one-to-one work, to workshop facilitation, the Developing Writers Programme, to teaching school pupils in the Targeting Talent Programme, working as a Writing Fellow and, not least, in improving their own writing and research.

Finally, the most recent and perhaps most crucial innovation has been the development of the Wits Writing Programme as discussed above, and which brings its practices and personnel into closer conversation with teaching and learning in all disciplines across the University. Through the programme, the Wits Writing Centre becomes central to a developing ecosystem of writing initiatives at Wits.
The Centre has been an innovative model, with Prof. Nichols being asked four times to give the keynote address at national writing centre indabas, and participating in the establishment of new writing centres and writing programmes both nationally and internationally.

Since 2015 her expanded research programme has been focused on writing, listening, and the development of the citizen scholar, with the most recent research conducted in collaboration with colleagues and tutors in the Wits Writing Programme and the Wits Writing Centre.

### Wits Writing Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Participants in workshops</th>
<th>Clients seen in one-to-one writing consultations</th>
<th>Total number of people worked with in workshops and consultations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>5 320</td>
<td>1 431</td>
<td>6 751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>6 758</td>
<td>2 713</td>
<td>9 471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>11 093</td>
<td>1 193</td>
<td>12 286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018*</td>
<td>6 417</td>
<td>1 180</td>
<td>7 597</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019 mid-year figures</td>
<td>4 500</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>5 204</td>
</tr>
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*The decline in figures in 2018 is related to lower enrolment in the Targeting Talent Programme and the Wits Writing Centre’s greater concentration on running the first year of the Wits Writing Programme

### Writing for law students

The School of Law Writing Centre is discipline specific and works with students as part of their existing courses. Initially it was an ad-hoc student-run centre, but after a needs analysis the School provided dedicated work space and appointed two full-time staff members, Associate Professor Salim Nakhjavani and lecturer Jean Moore. In April 2015 it opened its doors in its present format.

The Centre’s primary mandate is to teach legal writing in various LLB courses, throughout the degree, and at LLM and PhD levels.

Prof. Nakhjavani and Moore are active in scholarly research, both in law and in education. Moore has written textbooks, developed extended-curriculum and academic-writing materials, consulted for the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training (Umalusi) and managed educational development projects.
Prof. Nakhjavani is also a practising advocate, was part of the team that established the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court between 2002 and 2003, and was a UN prosecutor in the criminal proceedings against Khmer Rouge leaders in Cambodia from 2011 to 2015.

The Centre uses workshops to help with drafting of heads of argument to improve the students’ Moot for the LLB Moot course. It also encourages and supports students to become active outside the university, not least through conference presentations.

Prof. Nakhjavani and Moore state that the Centre also has a more traditional writing centre component: “We select and train – through ongoing, reflective practice – 10 student writing consultants, all senior law students, who are available to assist students one-on-one with the legal writing assignments. These consultants also assist with providing constructive formative feedback on student drafts, under our guidance. This often involves a whole cohort of students submitting compulsory drafts, which are reviewed after careful norming and moderation of feedback.”

Prof. Nakhjavani and Moore themselves are available for individual consultations with students. They also work with staff members, supporting their academic-writing development. They work with Mandela Institute courses, the Wits Plus programme, the Wits Law Clinic, and the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (Cals) to ensure that legal writing is developed in a range of contexts at Wits.

The Writing Centre was given a commendation in last year’s Council on Higher Education (CHE) review of the Wits LLB.

LLB, LLM and PhD enrolment figures reflect the number of participants in the Centre’s activities as it works with whole classes within lectures.

**Writing for education students**

The provision of a writing centre at the Wits School of Education in Parktown means the students do not have to travel to the main campus for consultations. It also recognises, says its academic head, Dr Laura Dison, that “Education students have particular discourse requirements and demands that are best mediated by peer tutors/writing consultants who have an intimate knowledge of the course content and the assessment task demands”.

These consultants are known as peer tutors, as requested by the Centre’s primary funder, the Council of Education, and the University Capacity Development Grant. The tutors are senior Education students trained to develop academic writing abilities and an understanding of literacy in the classroom.
In 2019 there are 26 peer tutors, who include two retired school principals.

They offer the following services:

- Hour-long consultations for any student from first-year to PhD level;
- Assistance for Education 1 tutors, so the tutor focuses on content and the peer tutor on the academic writing;
- Ad-hoc workshops, mostly aligned to first-year course assignments;
- Workshops on exam preparation; and
- Project WURU (Write Up Read Up), a one-year support programme for first-year students, closely aligned to the Education 1 academic course. Designed to bridge the gap between high school essays and academic writing, it involves small groups of five to 10 that meet for 45 minutes weekly. In 2015 students were selected by how they rated in the costly academic literacy National Benchmark Test (NBT), run by UCT; in 2016 by an in-house test; and in 2017 by their mark in their first Education 1 assignment. In 2018, WURU became voluntary, which removed the stigma of being “invited” to a support programme and increased its popularity.

The peer tutors for postgraduates run a series of structured writing workshops on subjects such as academic writing, developing ideas, argument structure, avoiding plagiarism, and reading for writing. They also run a Shut up and Write programme for postgraduates to work on their own writing.

The number of WURU students should be viewed as an approximation as there is never 100% attendance. The pattern is that attendance increases just before the due date of an essay and tends to wane thereafter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NO OF WURU STUDENTS</th>
<th>NO OF WURU WEEKS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>120</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>2019*</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>10 **</td>
<td>3 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total number of sessions attended since 2015 assuming 100% attendance *</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 744</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*As at 10 May 2019
Besides WURU, the School of Education Writing Centre consults with an average of eight students a day. Over 18 academic weeks, the number of Business as Usual consultations is $8 \times 5 \times 18 = 720$ per year.

The Centre runs workshops attended by 20 to 30 students. Sometimes, the peer tutors are invited to present a workshop during an Education 1 lecture, as happened this year. Four peer tutors (two undergraduate and two postgraduate) presented a workshop on APA Referencing to the entire first-year cohort of approximately 600 students.

8.3 Wits Language Policy – Giving voice to diversity

In 2015 the University adopted the Wits Language Policy. Although English remains the language of instruction, Professor Andrew Crouch, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic, says “the long-term goal is to be able to offer isiZulu and Sesotho as languages of learning and teaching alongside English”.
Since Wits students and staff come from diverse backgrounds, the policy aims to improve cultural understanding and enhance teaching and learning. It is also intended to produce multilingual professionals and promote multilingual research, as well as being a way to increase inclusivity by, for example, adding isiZulu and Sesotho translations to campus signage and official stationery, such as letterheads.

Dr Libby Meintjes, Language Policy Adviser in Prof. Crouch’s office, is spearheading implementation of the policy.

“We want to promote African languages for academic study and research,” she says. “It helps students understand concepts better if they can work a little bit in their own language. Aside from asking students to learn an African language for communication purposes and to promote diversity, we are also very keen on introducing some form of multilingual teaching.” And a few departments are piloting this in 2019, starting with group tutorials.

From 2019, all incoming students in the Faculty of Humanities must study a second language for a full year. IsiZulu speakers must take Sesotho, and Sesotho speakers take isiZulu, while students who are fluent in both are required to study either South African Sign Language (SASL) or another language offered at Wits.

“At present the courses (in Humanities) are being taught by the Department of African Languages, and focus on communicative proficiency – speaking, reading and writing the language,” Meintjes says. She believes that embedding a compulsory language requirement in the curriculum, with degree credit, is really effective because it acknowledges language ability as an important professional skill.

Other faculties are also developing strategies to ensure their students can communicate in more than one South African language.

Although not yet mandatory, engineering students can choose either isiZulu or Sesotho electives as part of their first-year curriculum. Engineering is also considering options for language immersion in subsequent years of study that will culminate in students presenting their projects in isiZulu or Sesotho.

In 2018 Health Sciences introduced the Uthini isiZulu language-learning app, which assists students in asking relevant questions when taking clinical histories from patients. The app includes time each week with a virtual tutor. Medical students are tested on this ability to communicate with patients in a clinical situation as part of their assessments.

University staff, too, are able to study elementary isiZulu, Sesotho and SASL, through the Wits Language School. Eighty-one faculty-based staff took classes in 2018, with most (59) choosing isiZulu.

Before approving the language policy, Wits conducted a survey in 2014, which found that isiZulu is the most widely spoken language on campus and the language most
students and staff wished to learn, followed by Sesotho. Since these two languages represent the two largest African language groups (Nguni and Sotho) in South Africa, promoting them has the best potential to improve communication across the board.

Sign language has been included because it is a semi-official language, it supports deaf students and staff, and Wits has existing strengths in this area. SASL is offered in the School of Education’s Centre for Deaf Studies; in the School of Literature, Language and Media; and at the Wits Language School.

Meintjes also underlines the importance of Portuguese and French, as languages widely spoken across Africa. She believes people who speak multiple languages have a broader understanding of issues and are better at multitasking and cognitive skills generally.

The first phase of implementing the policy, which is ongoing, is to ensure that all new signage and branding is multilingual and that key documents such as contracts, application forms and codes of conduct are translated. “We started with lower-hanging fruit like changing business cards and new signs that have gone up in English, Sesotho and isiZulu,” explains Crouch.

The largest challenges to implementing the language policy fully are resource and time constraints, especially given the need to train multilingual teachers and the costs of producing materials. Meintjes emphasises it is a long-term, incremental project and adds that she has been pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm thus far.

“In three years’ time our Humanities students will go out and we will start to see the impact (in wider society),” she says. Language attitudes are important and multilingual professionals can contribute towards changing corporate cultures.

Meintjes is excited by the potential to develop technical and subject-specific terminology at Wits.

“This is terminology from the ground up, from students and staff working in their disciplines ... We will put this together in a database, check it for grammatical correctness and begin to produce terminology lists for students going forward ... In that way, we will be growing the languages as well,” she says. These lists will ultimately contribute to a new academic lexicon.

The policy will also assist in extracting and integrating indigenous knowledge into various academic disciplines, which aligns with calls for decolonisation of the curriculum. “If we explore different world views and different takes on things, across the board, then everybody learns something,” she says.
8.4 Wits Language School – Conversing in context

Professor Beatrys Lacquet was appointed acting director of the Wits Language School in February 2019. Trained as an electrical engineer, Prof. Lacquet believes she brings “a different approach” to the facility.

She explains the complex trajectory of her career, which has taken her from laboratories to the management echelons of universities. At Wits, she has served as Head of Department, Dean, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and more. “Call me Mrs Fix-It,” she laughs, explaining how she has enjoyed confronting complex challenges, whether they entailed designing the first solar panel prototype decades ago, or knocking university departments such as IT, security, catering or library maintenance into tip-top shape.

Now tasked with redefining the language school, she says her directorship of the Centre of Systems Engineering has fed into her management of Wits facilities, such as online programmes, short courses and Wits Plus part-time study, that effectively link to the services offered by the school.

At the beginning of last year, Wits put the language school under Wits Plus as it is not an academic programme. So if it is not part of the Humanities programmes and is not academic, what is it?

It is about the provision of language education, yes. But it is a third-stream income business, which relies on the Wits brand.

Lacquet explains the school’s offerings using English as an example: “Wits Language School has divided itself into different English units: English as a Foreign Language; English Improvement; you can learn a new language; you can improve your proficiency in a language; or you can learn to teach a language or to translate and interpret. And you can also learn English as an academic language.”

In short, it is an initiative that takes into account the fact that language itself underpins one’s ability to function optimally in the world.

Some courses can be taken online. For example, says Prof. Lacquet, the Tesol (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) course has three options: “a class-based course, another which is blended learning and a third that is online but they come in for a week at the end of it, to be tested on their ability to teach”.

Students of the school are employed adults, who literally come from all over the world. When foreigners want to come to South Africa to study, they have to apply for a visa. For this they need to prove they are proficient in English (or will study it) and enrol in a course.
Wits will test their proficiency and if they are graded below an acceptable level, will not take them on as students. The University will suggest they first upgrade their language skills. “And then we present a closed loop,” says Prof. Lacquet. “At Wits Language School they will have the opportunity to improve their language.”

Proficiency is also an issue for the education Sector Education and Training Authorities (Setas). Prof. Lacquet says: “Gazillions of teachers in our schools are not proficient in English; we teach them reading, writing, report writing, presentation skills and all those kinds of things.

“We access them through the Setas, which are typically education, training and development practices servicing the Basic Education departments. We currently have projects in Gauteng, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape. We do this for English proficiency, and other languages, but we also do something similar for sign language, in which Wits has a particular strength.

“Actually, we’re not selling language courses at all,” Prof. Lacquet says, explaining the work she’s done in editing her school’s website. “We sell the experience of being conversant in a language in a particular context. Ultimately it is a tool supporting the business of learning and being in the world.”
The Rembrandt Gallery on West Campus has been transformed into the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management Postgraduate Centre.
Professor Andrew Crouch, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic, says: “The world doesn’t stand still ...there’s a need to adjust to the paradigm outside through creative strategies to promote better teaching and learning.”

One of those strategies is creating specific areas that incorporate technology into pedagogical practice or that encourage collaborative learning.

Here are some of them:

9.1 eFundanathi eZones – Fun learning with technology

On any given day, walking into the brightly coloured eZones on the Wits Education Campus is an eye-opener. Some days there is relative calm, with students taking a Geography exam via an interactive digital platform, while next door, lecturers learn how to use Microsoft Teams.

The next day, the space is utterly transformed, the two eZones combined into one vast space that can accommodate 160 people, and teems with sound and movement. Some students appear to be doodling on the walls, while a trio of others laughs uproariously, their heads bent over a screen as they lounge on beanbags. Another group is huddled around a table, arguing passionately about an image projected onto the wall. It appears somewhat chaotic, but beneath the buzz, focused learning is happening. This is eFundanathi, which means “learn with us”.

9 INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING SPACES AT WITS
eFundanathi Manager Dr Paula Barnard-Ashton is adamant that “technology-driven active learning spaces can break down the barriers of digital apartheid in South African higher education”. At eFundanathi, all students have access to high-speed Wi-Fi, laptops and tablets. Barnard-Ashton believes this can help address large class sizes and level the playing field for students.

eFundanathi, created in 2017, is used by both the School of Therapeutic Sciences and the School of Education, which are on the same campus in Parktown.

Third-year Physiotherapy student Marissa Maistry says classes at eFundanathi “are much more interactive, the embedded videos are beneficial as you can watch them again in your own time, and you can play games and track your progress”.

Rather than standing in front of a lecture theatre delivering a monologue, lecturers facilitate classes using technology. The physical layout of the eFundanathi space is flexible – the tables have wheels and can easily be configured into different contexts, and a concertina connecting door can be opened or closed to create different sized rooms. The walls are covered with write-and-wipe paint, and can be used for brainstorming and mind mapping. Split-screen projectors enable group learning as the lecturer can project up to four screens simultaneously, for comparison and discussion.

It is not feasible to have 70 students around a patient’s bed, but eFundanathi can livestream from a hospital and so present classes in that format. Students can also interact online with experts, and lecturers can incorporate quizzes, 3-D models, videos and even gaming technology into their lessons. It’s an environment that is fun and promotes creativity and innovation.

“We have postgraduate Nursing Education students who are building systems of the body in Minecraft,” says Barnard-Ashton of the gaming app with a virtual universe.

David Mabogoane, a third-year Nursing Science student, says the eZone facilities “promote self-reliance” and “when you have to go source information and then give feedback to your group, everybody in the group understands and learns from each other”.

Nosipho Mkhwanazi, a fourth-year Bachelor of Education student, finds online assessments at the eZone are better because technology “gives feedback immediately and you can see immediately where you have gone wrong”. She hopes to use similar technology when she is a teacher.

At the Learning Innovation Africa Conference in September 2018, Barnard-Ashton was placed second in the Learning Idols category for her presentation of eFundanathi video apps that teach clinical skills to students in Therapeutic Sciences.

The six-member eFundanathi team includes a graphic designer and IT experts alongside lecturers. The team is responsible for Moodle, the platform that creates lesson content. It also helps redesign curriculums for blended learning.
Staff and students enjoy the eZone, which is often fully booked. Barnard-Ashton is keen to expand.

Crouch says the University is busy developing more tech-savvy spaces: “The ground floor of the Wartenweiler Library is being turned into a Learning Innovation Centre, which in the daytime will be used to train staff in new technologies and e-learning, and will double up as a 24-hour study facility for students.

“We’ve also identified two of the most used lecture venues and are upgrading them to smart classrooms.” He expects construction of a Centre for Education Technologies to begin in 2019 and be completed by June 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other uses of eFundanathi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Free Student Use</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outside Workshops</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The hardware available for use at eFundanathi includes:
- 120 laptops
- 30 Galaxy Tabs
- 30 iPads

### 9.2 Simulation Laboratory – Life-like practice for future health professionals

At the Simulation Laboratory in the Wits Medical School, things often aren’t what they seem.

Two young women waving a disembodied arm are not re-enacting The Addams Family but practising phlebotomy, the drawing of blood from a patient.

Down the hall, a patient appears to be experiencing a paroxysm of coughing, followed by a prolonged epileptic seizure, complete with rolling eyes and jerking limbs. In reality he is SimMan3G, a high-fidelity simulator on which Therapeutic Sciences students practise life-saving techniques without endangering lives.
There are two such adult simulators, a white male known as Alan, and Norman, who is black. Because children have limited reserves compared with adults, the lab invested in four paediatric simulators, often called the MegaCode Kids, for practising skills for managing paediatric emergencies, such as inserting an endotracheal tube or using a defibrillator. There is also a high-fidelity newborn simulator to teach neonatal resuscitation and specialist care.

Simulation Laboratory Coordinator Dr Hilary Thurling says, “In teaching nurses or medical students or physiotherapists, it’s not ethical for them to practise on a live patient; they have to have really proved to be competent before going into a ward situation. The students learn the theory and individual skills, such as how to take blood pressure or put up an intravenous drip, in silos, but they never have the opportunity to put it all together and see the patient holistically, to integrate their knowledge and skills.”

This is where Alan and Norman play their part. They can be programmed to simulate any combination of organ and body part malfunction. They also have special make-up for mimicking wounds and bruises.

Students come to the lab in groups of three and are given a scenario – e.g. Alan could be presented as a 21-year-old involved in a car accident. The lab is kitted out with the equipment that would normally be found in a hospital ward or theatre (depending on the scenario). The monitors show information such as his respiration rate, blood pressure and oxygen saturation. When the students examine him, they discover his breathing is impeded, his chest is bruised from the safety belt and air bags, and one side of his chest is rising, indicating that he is bleeding into one lung. One pupil has blown and his breathing is wheezy.
The students must assess, diagnose and treat him. They could order blood analyses, x-rays or other tests and get results that inform subsequent actions. They could administer an IV or put Alan on a ventilator. If he goes into cyanosis, turning blue, they would have to resuscitate him.

The lab films the simulations and the recordings are used in subsequent debriefings, so students can actively identify what went right, where they went wrong, and how they would respond if presented with a similar scenario in future.

Lecturers observe from behind a partition but do not generally intervene; the aim is for students to learn through problem-solving in a safe, non-judgemental environment. The lecturer controls the simulator’s reactions, from his eyes to his toes, via a computer. There is even an option to change the mannequin’s generic American accent by having a local person voice him during the simulation.

Thurling and the lecturer design the scenarios, starting with what the lecturer wants the students to achieve. They can preload results for any tests the students might request. Students are assessed not only on their knowledge and clinical skills, but also their teamwork and soft skills such as communication.

Simulations help students develop their clinical judgement and build self-confidence for real-life application, since the debriefings require them to be introspective and critique themselves.

Sometimes the lab runs simulations for multidisciplinary groups, such as a team of a doctor, nurse and physiotherapist. These encourage interdisciplinary respect so that doctors realise ward nurses, who see patients for sustained periods, have information that they do not. Undergraduate medical students, who are in large classes, can access the lab by applying to Thurling for simulations through their student societies.

Building of the Simulation Lab began in 2015 and it has been fully operational since 2017.

Nursing lecturers and students use it the most, followed by Emergency Medicine and Anaesthesia students.

Thurling has applied for the lab to be accredited by the Society for Simulation in Health Care, as recognition for the fact that it is following industry best practice.

Space has been earmarked to quadruple the size of the Simulation Lab within the next two years.

Thabang Mokoena, a qualified nurse and fourth-year medical student, says the lab has been a safe haven for him. “The SimLab has helped me gain confidence in my approach to real-life emergency situations. Dr Thurling approaches the simulations in a simple way that makes it easy for everyone to follow.”
Wits Sibanye-Stillwater Digital Mining Laboratory, known as DigiMine, is a state-of-the-art research-mining laboratory, which aims to make mining safer and more sustainable using digital technologies.

The Chamber of Mines building on West Campus, which houses the School of Mining Engineering, has been converted into a “mine”, complete with surface (using the flat roof of the building), vertical shaft (using a stairwell in the fourth quadrant of the building) and mock mine with control room in the basement.

It is part of the Wits Mining Institute and is one of a kind.

In development since 2015, DigiMine was officially launched in March 2018. It forms part of the Future of Mining Initiative, driven from the Vice-Chancellor’s office. In April 2019, Sibanye-Stillwater committed an additional R30million to the lab over three years, ring-fenced for investment in safety-related technologies.

Tanya Schönwald, Development Specialist at the university’s Development and Fund-raising office, says: “The focus of DigiMine is innovation and development of digital technologies that will change the face of mining across Africa.”

DigiMine is a testing and development laboratory, where its 12 postgrad students work in multidisciplinary teams. A research group might include postgraduates from data sciences, health or development studies as well as engineers. A health scientist, for example, could investigate the impact of a proposed technology on the long-term health of miners.
DigiMine researchers take technologies used above ground, such as wireless communication and global positioning systems (GPS), and work out how to make them usable underground.

The Director of the Wits Mining Institute, Professor Fred Cawood, has observed that without good communication between the surface of the mine – the control room – and those underground, it is not possible to make mines safer.

He adds that, like with cellphones’ multiple functions, communication hardware could potentially be used for navigation and positioning, both to locate miners after an incident and to enable them to find their way out. Another use could be to transmit biometric data of miners involved in an accident.

Schönwald points out: “You can’t just take a GPS and use it underground, because there’s no network and no satellite communication. So how do we get uninterrupted real-time networking underground without cable?” Underground Wi-Fi is the obvious solution, but as yet, she notes, it’s not uninterrupted.

Another DigiMine focus is system integration for smart mining, where data from different systems is combined to enable better decision-making. “For example,” says Schönwald, “combining air-quality data from a ventilation system with data from a temperature-management system so that, in the event of a fire, the ventilation system would go into reversal, extracting air instead of pushing it in. That would all happen in real time and digitally, whereas currently it takes much longer.

“At DigiMine, research and innovation is taken up to a certain point, let’s call it ‘prototype level’,” says Schönwald. “Thereafter, Wits and a corporate partner are establishing a solutions laboratory, where research and innovations that come from DigiMine will be fast-tracked and commercialised.” One example might be a wireless communications application that could be marketed to mining companies.

In the mock mine, students from Mining Engineering and disciplines such as Geology train in a simulated environment. It includes a lamp room, full-size tunnel, a stope (drilling area from which ore is extracted), a safe area for emergency situations and a blasting wall with geological features like those in real mines.

Ultimately, the full-body scanners at the mine entrance, which ensure miners take the required safety equipment underground, could also use facial recognition and biometrics to block unauthorised personnel and to analyse the physical health of miners, flagging those who are at risk, e.g. someone with blurred vision.

Femi Kolade, a PhD candidate at DigiMine, explains how simulations allow students to solve problems such as locating missing miners. He underlines the need for accuracy and precision in such situations. Another example is using data from a blast to model the potential effects on rock stability, not only at the blast site but downstream, which could help predict the radius for evacuation prior to the blast. The stope in the mock mine can be moved to simulate risk situations.
9.4 Science Student Success Centre – Space for self-empowerment

It’s impossible to ignore the Science Student Success Centre on the ground floor of the TW Kambule Mathematical Sciences Building on West Campus, its adjacent indoor and outdoor spaces filled with the buzz of conversation.

The sunlit glass-enclosed indoor area is bright and airy and the outdoor space, well supplied with tables and benches, is conducive to collaborative learning. Critically, the entire area is Wi-Fi-enabled.

Science students asked for a learning space where they could also access academic and writing support, and the centre was opened in 2018 (although the outdoor furniture arrived only in mid-2019). The centre includes a writing centre that supports students in their writing on a one on one consultation basis as well as offering customised workshops for the various schools in the Faculty and a post-graduate short-course, Foundations of Scientific Thinking and Writing."

Headed by Professor Liz Brenner, the Faculty’s Assistant Dean for Teaching and Learning, the Centre is already chalking up successes. A student who was woefully underperforming in 2018, for example, with results hovering around 20%, is gaining distinctions and even considering postgrad study because of support from the Centre’s multidisciplinary team.

The Centre can accommodate 25 students inside and up to 60 outside. The outdoor area can also be used for more formal workshops, notes Brenner.

9.5 CLM Postgraduate Centre – Building a PhD community

The Rembrandt Gallery, with its distinctive architecture, has been repurposed as a postgraduate centre for the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management (CLM).

The building dates back to 1964, when it was built as a Rand Show pavilion for the Rembrandt tobacco company. Kathy Munro, Honorary Associate Professor in the School of Architecture and Planning, has written that the space became the venue for many important exhibitions hosted by the Rembrandt van Rijn Art Foundation and its purpose was to promote the arts.

The gallery was donated to Wits in 1984 and for a while stored the University’s rock art collection.

But the building was neglected for many years – before being given new life as the Postgraduate Centre in October 2018.
Professor Deeksha Bhana, Assistant Dean: Postgraduate Affairs, says: “The aim of the Centre is to start building a PhD community and this space lends itself to developing a culture where students interact socially with their peers and feel less isolated.”

The triangular inner space of the main gallery on the ground floor has been fitted with funky yet functional furniture to encourage social interaction and collaborative work. Bright yellow minimalist chairs balanced on tubular steel legs are juxtaposed with comfortable sofas upholstered in hard-wearing grey. By contrast, the upper mezzanine level is divided into lockable cubicles where students can immerse themselves in quiet research and study.

“Students appreciate having a space where they can settle for the whole day, and which is distinct from the library, and allows them to feel they are part of the faculty’s research community. They can meet their supervisors or advisers here rather than in the more formal office setting. And there are regulars who come here to work every day,” Prof. Bhana says.

Fadzai Mukonowehuro, a PhD candidate at the Wits School of Governance, agrees: “Being here puts one into a proper reflection space, conducive to deep thinking and a general sense of withdrawal into the best space for a PhD writer.” She adds that you can’t find this in a classroom or at home. “You can focus when you need to, but also feel you’re not alone. Because the PhD journey is very lonely… you get encouraged by finding others here who have experienced this too.”

The gallery is also used for writing retreats, seminars and workshops for postgrads from the five schools within the CLM faculty – Law, Business, Governance, Economic and Business Sciences, and Accountancy.

Dr Na-iem Dollie, CLM Faculty Manager: Postgraduate Writing, sees the space as an “opportunity for people to be part of a community of researchers that makes socialised writing a distinctly good option for, and in, postgraduate work … The erected barriers that we think ought to be part of the lonely PhD journey are broken down.”

Mmakgomo Tshatsinde, a PhD candidate attending a writing retreat at the Rembrandt Gallery, said: “I can get comfortable and spread my things out the way I prefer. It’s a great idea to have a space like this for postgraduates.”

The space is secure and access-controlled via student cards. There have been discussions about installing tea and coffee facilities or vending machines in the downstairs social area. Leigh Thuynsma, Financial Controller at the Faculty, says an average of 10 students are using the PG Rembrandt Gallery as their main study space over weekdays and weekends.
It's all about being a Wits graduate!
10 CELEBRATING STUDENTS’ SUCCESSES

10.1 Highlighting the achievements of Wits undergraduate students

It is difficult to articulate a single definition of student success as it often depends on the context within which an institution is functioning. Therefore, having a student success framework is critical.

However, for the purposes of this Review, student success is being measured only in terms of the academic achievement of Wits undergraduate (UG) students. The indicators used are retention rates, success rates, throughput rates and graduation rates. Student retention is defined as the number of students who enrol in a study programme, are actively engaged in it, don’t discontinue their studies and proceed to the following year at the same institution. In our context, student retention has been expressed as the number of students that returned to the university the following year divided by the number of students initially enrolled.

Success rate, also known as course pass rate, is defined in our context as the number of students who passed courses divided by the total number enrolled for courses. This number can be calculated for the institution as a whole or smaller units such as faculties, or according to demographic variables such as race or gender.

Throughput rate, also known as the completion rate, is defined as the number of students who are enrolled and actively engaged in a study programme, and complete it within minimum time. In our context, throughput rate is calculated according to the year in which students first enrol.

Retention rates

Retention rates of first-year students and all UG students

Findings from various cohort studies have shown that the biggest loss of students to the university system, that is, attrition, happens during or at the end of the first year of study. Monitoring the retention of UG students from their first to second year of study is thus of vital importance. In general, students who leave university are individuals who have struggled to adapt academically and/or socially to the norms and values of the institution, or who have unmet material or psychosocial needs.
The retention rate of both first-year and all UG students is depicted in Figure 1. As expected, the retention of all UG students is higher than the retention of first years. From 2010 to 2014, there was a gradual increase in the retention of first-year UG students from 79% to 81%, jumping to 87% in 2015. However, this large improvement was followed by a significant decrease in 2016 (to 83%) and 2017 (to 82%). This reduction can be attributed to the negative impact of the student protests in 2015 and 2016. In 2018, the retention rate began to recover and increased to 83%.

A similar trend is visible in the retention rate of all UG students in this period. The retention rate increased from 83% in 2010 to 90% in 2014, with a significant jump to 94% recorded in 2015. However, there was a drop in the retention of all UG students from 2016 (92%) to 2018 (91%). Again, the data shows the negative impact of the protests.

Retention rates of all UG students by race

The retention of African UG students, while high, is lower than that of other race groups (Figure 2). The gap in retention rates between African and White students was narrowing up to 2015, but increased between 2016 and 2018.
Retention rates of all UG students by gender

Overall, the retention of female UG students is higher than that of male UG students (Figure 3). In 2010, the retention of female UG students was 90% whereas the male retention was 87%. In 2018, the retention of female UG students was 92% when compared with males at 89%.
Success rates

Success rates of first-year students and all UG students

The success rates for UG students, in all years of study increased gradually from 2010 (first-year UG students 74%; all UG students 82%) to 2014 (first year UG students 82%; all UG students 85%) (Figure 4). However, a significant decrease in the success rates for both UG student groups was recorded in 2016 (first-year students was 78%; all UG students 83%) and subsequent years until 2018. Once again, this drop can be attributed to the 2015 and 2016 student protests.

Success rates of all UG students by race

Overall, the success rate of African UG students is lower than that of other race groups (Figure 5). White UG students continue to have the highest success rates (90% in 2012; 92% in 2018), followed by Chinese, Indian and Coloured students. The performance gap between African and White students narrowed in 2014 and 2015, but has subsequently increased.
Overall, the success rate of female UG students is substantially higher than that of male UG students (Figure 6). This trend has continued from 2010 to 2018.
Throughput rates

Throughput rates of general academic first Bachelor’s (three-year) degree

The throughput rate, or percentage of students who complete their studies in minimum time, increased gradually from 34% to 36% between 2012 and 2015 (Figure 7). However, for the 2016 cohort, it decreased to 32%, again highlighting the negative impact of the protests. The percentage of students who completed in minimum+1 and minimum+2 has stabilised around 17% and 5%, respectively.

**Figure 7:** Throughput rates of general academic first Bachelor’s (three-year) degree (2012-2016 cohort)

![Bar chart showing throughput rates]

*This analysis is restricted to full-time students who enrolled as first-year students for the first time in the year indicated. Where m+2 falls in the current year, completion is based on students completed as at June and does not account for the year.

Throughput rates of general academic first Bachelor’s (three-year) degree by race

The throughput rate of African UG students has been the lowest for all entering cohorts from 2012 (29%) to 2016 (27%) (Figure 8). White UG students continue to have the highest throughput rates (47% in 2012; 47% in 2016), followed by Chinese, Indian and Coloured students. In 2015, the throughput rate of Chinese UG students was the highest ever recorded at 62%.
Throughput rates of general academic first Bachelor’s (three-year) degree by gender

The throughput rate of female UG students continues to exceed that of male UG students (Figure 9). In 2012, the throughput rate of female UG students was 39% whereas the male throughput rate was 27%. In 2016, the throughput rate of female UG students was 37% when compared with males at 25%.
Throughput rates of professional first Bachelor’s (four-year) degree

The percentage of students who complete four-year degree programmes in minimum time has been increasing gradually from 35% for the 2011 cohort to 38% for the 2015 group (Figure 10). The percentage of students who completed in minimum+1 and minimum+2 has stabilised around 12% and 6%, respectively.

Throughput rates of professional first Bachelor’s (four-year) degree by race

The throughput rate of African UG students is consistently lower than that of other race groups, with little change from 2011 (30%) to 2018 (31%) (Figure 11). White UG students continue to have the highest throughput rates (46% in 2011; 57% in 2015), followed by Coloured, Indian and Chinese students. In 2015, the throughput rate of Chinese UG students was the highest ever recorded at 60% for a 4-year degree.
Throughput rates of professional first Bachelor’s (four-year) degree by gender

The throughput rate of female UG students studying for a four-year degree continues to be higher (Figure 12). From 2011 to 2015 the throughput rate increased for females and decreased for males.
Throughput rates of professional first Bachelor’s (six-year) degree

The percentage of students who complete their six-year degree programmes in minimum time increased gradually from 42% for the 2009 cohort to 57% for the 2013 cohort of students (Figure 13). A significant jump in the percentage of students was recorded for the 2011 cohort at 73%. Further analysis will have to be done to determine the reason for this change. The percentage of students who completed in minimum+1 and minimum+2 has varied for the different cohorts.

Figure 13: Throughput rates for professional first Bachelor’s (six-year) degree (2009-2013 cohort)

Throughput rates of professional first Bachelor’s (6-year) degree by race

The throughput rate of African UG students is lower than for other races, but has improved substantially from 24% for the 2009 cohort to 39% for the 2013 cohort.
Throughput rates of professional first Bachelor’s (six-year) degree by gender

Unlike in other degree programmes, the throughput rate is higher for male students in most, but not all years of six-year degree programmes.

Figure 14: Throughput rates of professional first Bachelor’s (six-year) degree by race (2009-2013 cohort)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>AFRICAN</th>
<th>CHINESE</th>
<th>COLOURED</th>
<th>INDIAN</th>
<th>WHITE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 15: Throughput rates of professional first Bachelor’s (six-year) degree by gender (2009-2013 cohort)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>MALE</th>
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<tr>
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<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Numbers of students graduating

Number of students graduating with Bachelor degrees

Figure 16 shows that the number of students graduating with a Bachelor degree has increased significantly from 2010 to 2018, from 3087 to 4918.

![Figure 16: Graduation head counts by programme type (2010-2018)](image)

*This excludes Undergraduate Diploma or Certificate < 2 Years and Undergraduate Diploma or Certificate.*

Number of students graduating with Bachelor degrees by gender

Figure 17 shows there are more females than males graduating with a Bachelor degree.
Number of students graduating with Bachelor degrees by race

Figure 18 shows that there are more African students obtaining Bachelor degrees than other race groups, in line with the UG student enrolment patterns.

While much has been achieved in terms of student success, the results presented show that more work still needs to be done in order to close the academic achievement gaps between students of different races and genders.
10.2 Graduate exit survey on employment – A snapshot of Wits degree outcomes

Wits graduates are highly sought after in the workplace. This is not an idle perception; it is reflected in statistics which show that 97% of employed graduates find work within six months of completing their studies. And about 70% of these jobs are directly related to their field of study.

More than 50% of the graduates from March 2017 to July 2018 who completed an exit survey are now employed in South Africa’s private sector, with 67% having found work before they had finished studying and 25% within three months of graduating.

These are the results of the 6096 graduates who completed the Graduate Exit Survey compiled by the university’s Analytics and Institutional Research Unit with data obtained also from the Wits Examinations and Graduations Office. The number of completed surveys represents 39% of all the graduates from that period, with a 47% increase in the response rate from 2017 to 2018.

Of those who responded, 58% are female, 53% are African, 23% White, 14% Indian, 4% Coloured and 5% referred to themselves as “other”.

More than half (52%) are employed, with 23% furthering their studies and 19% not employed. 90% of those furthering their studies were doing so at Wits. Prof Andrew Crouch, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic, has called this “a badge of honour” and “testament to the high student satisfaction levels with the Wits academic experience and staff expertise”.

55% of those employed are female. 58% have a postgraduate qualification, with 23% having completed a Masters, 15% Honours and another 15% a Higher Diploma or Postgraduate Diploma. 4% have a PhD.

61% completed their degree in the minimum time and a greater percentage of graduates carrying on studying achieved this when compared with those who were already employed.

Just over half are working in the private sector, with 18% in government, 13% in schools, 3% employed by NGOs and civil organisations, and 1% self-employed.

The sector that is the biggest employer is education (21%), followed by the finance, insurance and actuarial sector (18%), health care (13%) and the engineering or industrial sector (12%).

Regarding graduates from the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment (EBE),
71% are employed in jobs directly related to their field of study. Males dominant this sector; they represent 65% of these graduates.

Half of the Health Science graduates, of which 24% are medical doctors, are working for government. Interestingly, 71% of them are female.

Commerce, Law and Management (CLM), in contrast, has an almost equal distribution of male and female graduates. It is a field in which it seems postgraduate qualifications score; 76% of its working graduates have studied beyond undergraduate level.

Despite a belief that Humanities graduates are not easily able to find work, 97% were employed within six months of graduating, which is slightly above the Wits norm. Half worked in the education field, while 31% were furthering their studies. They rate better than other faculties in finishing their studies in the minimum time; 76% of graduates achieved this.

More than half (53%) of Science graduates reported they were furthering their studies. This is from a cohort in which 41% who completed the survey already had a postgraduate qualification at graduation. The finance, insurance and actuarial industry is the biggest employer of Science graduates; 29% of graduates work in that sector, followed by 21% in education.

10.3 Some Outstanding Students

Law students represent Africa in Geneva

The competition is a simulated hearing of the Dispute Settlement System of the World Trade Organisation.

The Wits team qualified to represent Africa, along with three teams from Kenya, at the African regional round in Nairobi in April.

The Wits team were the first in the regional competition to win all three categories, for best written submissions for the complainant, best written submissions for the respondent, and overall best written submissions.

The team’s coach, Associate Professor Franziska Sucker, said after their regional win that “the students have worked very hard to get there and represented the Wits School of Law in the best possible way”.

Law students represent Africa at Oxford

LLB students Anathi Canham, Nobuhle Kunene, Shandre Smith and Sophie Smit took part in the international round of the Price Media Law Moot Court Competition at Oxford University in April.

They had won the regional round in Johannesburg in February, representing the Wits Moot Court Society, winning Best Written Submissions. Kunene, taking part in her first Moot competition, won the award for Best Speaker in the Finals.

Wits data boffins in China

Branden Ingram, Brian Maistry and Liron Mizrahi of the Wits School of Computer and Applied Mathematics took part in the global finals of the Huawei ICT Skills Competition in Shenzhen, China in May 2018. They placed third in the Enterprise IT track, competing against 23 teams from 18 countries.

Wits became a Huawei Authorised Information and Network Academy (HAINA) and ran its first short course in Cloud Computing in November 2017, with four Witsies learning about cloud computing and building their own private clouds using Huawei Fusion-Sphere technologies.

They went on to qualify as Huawei Certified Network Associates and entered the Huawei ICT Skills Competition, competing against over 40 000 students from around the world. Wits won the Excellent Institution prize and Steve James, Ingram and Maistry took first, second and third places respectively.
Wits PhD student wins international journal award

The Journal of the Optical Society of America A (JOSA A) created a new prize for the best paper from an emerging researcher in 2018 - and Wits PhD student Nokwazi Mphuthi walked off as the inaugural winner.

Mphuti’s winning article, “Are Bessel beams resilient to aberrations and turbulence?” aimed to disprove a long-held myth in the field of optics that Bessel beams, a kind of wave form that are non-diffractive in nature, are self-healing and can reconstruct in the spatial profile after all forms of obstructions.

The journal editors said the selection committee was particularly impressed by the originality of Mphuthi’s study, the depth of the scientific analysis, and the clarity of presentation.

As part of her MSc project, Mphuti worked in collaboration with Hartebeesthoek Radio Astronomy Observatory (South Africa), NASA (US), and Observatoire de la Côte d’Azur (France) to develop the first Lunar Laser Ranging system in the Southern Hemisphere.
Masters Economics student Baneng Naape was crowned winner of the postgraduate section of the 2018 Nedbank Old Mutual Budget speech essay competition. He won R150 000.

Students from the Wits School of Economic and Business Sciences dominated the postgraduate category, with five among the 10 finalists. Cayleigh Brink was second runner-up.

Benjamin McGraw won the postgrad section in 2017 and Raphael Ngarachu was the undergraduate winner in 2016, walking off with R60 000. The prize-giving event is timed to coincide with the Minister of Finance’s annual Budget Speech. He traditionally makes his way there direct from Parliament on Budget Day.
Jules Ntumba, Tso Mello and Fiona Ndlovu won $10,000 from the UK-based SITA Air Transport Community Foundation for their travel idea.

The travel innovation competition, a partnership with Wits and its Tshimologong Precinct, was launched in March 2018 to address what information, tools or technology first-time air travellers in Africa need to make their journeys easy and enjoyable. The trio had recently completed their Bachelor of Science degrees in Aeronautical Engineering when they were announced as the winners.

“Young people don’t usually have difficulties navigating around an airport, but an older, potentially illiterate traveller will experience challenges. Our research showed that in Africa one out of three people above the age of 50 can’t read and we wanted to cater to them,” said Mello.

Dr Lerato Masisi a Wits lecturer and one of the judges, said the teams were judged on originality, target audience, solutions, reports and presentations. Team Wits Elites, comprising Rachel Mohlomi, Nqobile Mhlanga and Takatso Molekane, was one of the runners-up and walked off with $1000.
Wits students in winning team at world supercomputing competition

Third-year information engineering students, Anita de Mello Koch and Kaamilah Desai from the Wits School of Electrical and Information Engineering, were part of the South African team that won first prize in the student category at the International Supercomputing Conference in Frankfurt, Germany in June 2019. The four other members of the undergraduate team that won the International Student Cluster Competition are from UCT.

De Mello Koch said it was great that South Africans ‘can show we are at the forefront of this technology. You are not necessarily exposed to supercomputing in your studies and this is a great way to get introduced to the field. It was also amazing to attend the conference where we learnt a lot from the greatest minds in supercomputing’.

Professor Estelle Trengove, Head of the Wits School of Electrical and Information Engineering said she was ‘tremendously proud of Anita and Kaamilah. Their achievement shows that our students are able to compete with the best in the world at the cutting edge of information technology’.

This win follows Wits’s success at the Centre for High Performance Computing’s 12th National Conference in Cape Town in December 2018:

- De Mello Koch and Desai and their fellow third-year information engineering students Brendon Swanepoel and Nicholas Kastanos won the best teamwork award; and
• Hassaan Hameed, Basheq Tarifi, Nathan Jones (second-year biomedical engineering students) and Sansha Gupta (second-year electrical engineering students) won the award for the most innovative team.

Third-year information engineering student Rashaad Cassim was one of the winners of the social engineering competition in the South African National Research Network Cyber Security Challenge that ran concurrently.

Strapping students win at the Comrades – again and again and again

Fourth-year BSc Physiotherapy students Lee Badenhorst, Andrea Biffi, Cherne Langeveldt, Aphelele Nyembezi, Louise Matthews and Lauren Tomes are the "strapping team" that won first prize for two successive years at the 2015 and 2016 Comrades Marathons for their superior strapping techniques on pain-ridden athletes.

Jenna Levendis, Mickayla Pinto, Kelly Prinsloo, Sabrina Filippi and Gillian Robertson won the competition in 2018.

All eight Physiotherapy departments in South Africa enter this competition in which Wits physios have set the national benchmark.
We are very proud of what we have achieved over the past five years. We have put in place or strengthened structures at multiple levels to improve teaching and student learning at Wits.

We have diversified our student population, and implemented a number of activities to help students succeed. These range from completely redesigning Orientation Week to proactively identifying students who need support early enough to prevent them dropping out or failing, and putting staff and resources in place to offer a variety of forms of student support.

We have significantly increased the range of professional learning opportunities for academic staff, including the use of blended learning, which integrates face-to-face and online learning. Collaboration between the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development and the Research Office is enabling support of academic staff in their development as both university teachers and researchers. We have piloted an Early Career Academic Development Programme for new academic staff.

In the curriculum arena, a significant achievement is the development of Writing Intensive courses and writing centres, supported by writing fellows. In addition, students who cannot study full-time now have access to an increased range of courses and programmes they can take outside of normal working hours through Wits Plus, as well as options to study online.

We have created several outstanding, special-purpose learning spaces for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

In the next five years we plan to build on these achievements. We will increase flexible learning opportunities by developing a number of courses and programmes that will be offered fully online, as well increasing the use of blended learning in other courses. Wits Plus will expand the number of courses and programmes offered part time after hours, including key courses that may otherwise be impeding the academic progress of many students.

Our approach to enhancing academics in their role as university teachers will become more coordinated as we implement the Framework for Continuous Professional Learning for Academics as University Teachers, which is currently being developed. Particular emphasis will be placed on growing staff capacity in curriculum design and using diverse forms of assessment.
In its enrolment plan for the next five years, Wits intends to substantially increase the percentage of postgraduate students, which will require new ways of thinking about how to support them holistically, both academically and in terms of personal development and wellness.

In the next few years much greater use will be made of data analytics to guide efforts to support students and to provide evidence of the effectiveness of such efforts.

We will identify and resource more physical spaces that are suitable as informal learning spaces or for supporting particular innovative teaching approaches.

All of these efforts will be guided by the Wits Learning and Teaching Plan 2020-2024. In addition, we have developed the Wits Institutional Framework for Student Success, which will guide us in our efforts towards integrated, holistic support for the success of our students.

Professor Diane Grayson
Senior Director: Academic Affairs