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IFC EMPLOYABILITY TOOL

Bridging Education to Employment

EMPLOYABILITY TOOL ASSESSMENT

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS (ABRIDGED)

For

UMFOLOZI TVET

2 August 2019

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I. REPORT SUMMARY

A. Summary of Self-Assessment

The total score is a weighted average of scores for all sections, for additional information on the assessment process and scoring see Annex I.

NCV and R191	PERCENTAGE SCORE	RAW SCORE	POSSIBLE SCORE
Strategy for Employability	68.8%	11	16
Quality and Relevance of Learning	63.0%	63	100
Employer Engagement	58.3%	14	24
Career and Placement Services	52.3%	23	44
Retention, Completion & Alumni	43.1%	31	72
TOTAL SCORE	55.5%	142	256

* Final percentage score is a weighted average of the score for each section. 'Possible score' excludes responses marked N/A

SKILLS	PERCENTAGE SCORE	RAW SCORE	POSSIBLE SCORE
Strategy for Employability	75.0%	12	16
Quality and Relevance of Learning	74.0%	74	100
Employer Engagement	65.0%	13	20
Career and Placement Services	56.8%	25	44
Retention, Completion & Alumni	51.9%	27	52
TOTAL SCORE	63.1%	151	232

* Final percentage score is a weighted average of the score for each section. 'Possible score' excludes responses marked N/A

B. Overview

Umfolozi management completed 4 self-assessment reports for the following curriculum streams: NCV, Report 191 (Business and Engineering), and Skills programs. In practice, responses for NCV and Report 191 (Business and Engineering) did not differ significantly and have been combined, noting areas of discrepancy. For skills programs, a separate summary score has been provided, given the differences in nature of the overall programs and student demographics (skills programs often target upskilling of company employees). The body of the report notes differences in responses for skills programs where relevant.

The IFC Employability site visit took place at the Umfolozi Head Office and Richtek campus June 10-12, 2019 and consisted of focus groups and interviews with teaching staff, administrative staff, employers, final-year students, and alumni. In addition, 287 student surveys were collected from all campuses. Due to connectivity restrictions at Umfolozi, paper surveys were distributed and collected by Umfolozi staff and the responses were manually entered into the Employability Tool online system.

Umfolozi TVET College

South Africa has 50 accredited public TVET Colleges which operate on more than 260 campuses throughout the country. Public TVET Colleges are established and operated under the authority of the Continuing Education and Training Act 16 of 2006 as amended and are overseen by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Umfolozi TVET College is one of 9 public TVETs in KwaZulu-Natal. The College has 8 main campuses at Chief Albert Luthuli, Eshowe, Esikhawini, Mandeni, Richtek, Sundumbili/Isithebe, Bambanana and Nkandla. In addition it operates 6 skills centres at Jininindomnyama, Nseleni, Thubelihle, Alton, Maphumulo and the ZCBF Community Park. It is estimated that 7,000 students are enrolled at Umfolozi TVET college across all campuses and programs.¹

Umfolozi offers programs including:

- National Certificate Vocational (NCV) is a three year program at N2-N4 level, usually taken post matric. Students completing NCV earn a National Certificate (Vocational) at N4 level. NCV is an alternative vocational pathway to grades 10, 11 and 12 of the school system. In practice however, students enter NCV after 12 grade/school matric. The curriculum is centrally designed and updated by the Department of Higher Education (DHET) and rolled out at TVETs across South Africa. NCV programs enrolled 2649 students at the time of assessment.
- Report 191 National Technical Education programs, commonly known as NATED certificates, are offered at N4 to N6 for Engineering and Business Studies. These part-qualifications culminate in a National Diploma once students meet work experience requirements, which are 18 months for Business and 24 months for Engineering (or a relevant trade test). Approximately 3000 students were enrolled in Report 191 programs at the time of assessment (see footnote 1).
- Skills programs combine artisan courses at N1-N3 levels and short-term occupational training courses. Occupational courses are offered through SETA sponsorship on a demand-driven basis and often designed in cooperation with industry. Approximately 900 students are enrolled in the skills curriculums.

C. Summary of Findings

The assessment showed that the College is staffed with a dedicated cohort of administrative staff and faculty. However, resources are limited: at the time of assessment, Umfolozi was in the process of hiring most of its Senior Management; of five Senior Management positions at the College (Principal and Deputy Principal), four were vacant (see Annex II). This resource gap presents a significant challenge for remaining staff who are stretched across missing functions. Further, four members of the College Council have been

¹ Number of enrolled students is reported to DHET by intake. NCV has an annual intake, Report 191 Business by semester and Report 191 Engineering by trimester. For this reason, enrolment figures across programs can be misleading. According to DHET, Umfolozi had 6,513 FTE students enrolled in NCV and Report 191 programs in 2017, the last year available. Skills programs are estimated by the College to have 900 students.

appointed and a number of Council positions remain to be filled. While this is challenging for the College, the management and governance changeover also presents an opportunity to reorganize Umfolozi for a greater focus on employability of graduates along the lines of the recommendations set out in this report.

The key finding of the assessment is the lack of systematic focus on employability at the College, despite the efforts of a dedicated cohort of staff. Challenges that make it more difficult to produce job-ready graduates include:

- lack of an employability strategy or explicit focus on employability for the College
- limited resources dedicated to engagement with employers and to building partnerships with local businesses
- a centralized curriculum that does not easily adjust to labor market needs (NCV and Report 191)
- hiring practices which limit the college's ability to bring up-to-date technical experience into classrooms
- no tracking of internship or employment outcomes of graduates and lack of alumni database, limiting ability for future data and information sharing.

Strategy for Employability Findings

- Umfolozi TVET does not have a specific strategy for employability and employability of graduates is not part of the mission or vision statements of the College;
- The College lacks a senior management role dedicated to employer relations and partnerships with external stakeholders; an Assistant Director for Student Support Services manages the Work Placement Office and reports to the Deputy Principal, Academic Services (see Annex II);
- College leadership and campus managers are not responsible for reporting work placement rates or employer engagement results to governance structures (Principal, College Council, DHET);
- The College does not have a system to track rates of work placement and continued studies of students who complete its programs.

Quality and Relevance of Learning Findings

- Workplace learning is embedded into South Africa's TVET curriculum. Programs include either an internship or, for NCV a week long 'work exposure' that all students complete during their studies.
- Updates to curriculum do not keep up with the speed of changes in the job market; this significantly impacts the College's ability to prepare job-ready candidates. College management feel they have no autonomy in modifying curriculum for NCV and Report 191 programs.
- Students and staff report that the NCV curriculum is challenging and is followed post 12th grade, not post 9th grade as intended. This points to continuing challenges with school education in South Africa, as documented in studies by the OECD and World Bank, amongst others. TVET colleges at NCV level are effectively tasked with providing students with basic literacy and mathematics skills not learned at school.

- Entrepreneurship and self-employment information and guidance is offered to a limited selection of students following specific tracks.
- The hiring of qualified teachers is a challenge due to public sector salaries, hiring practices and requirements. The vast majority of teachers at the College have an academic rather than vocational background. Management reported that they cannot hire practitioners as lecturers within the current system, due to public sector and union hiring regulations. Taken together, these issues are likely to severely limit the practical experience and up-to date skills that can be brought by lecturers to the College.
- For students, there is no wifi system available, use of computers is limited to class time, there is no physical library and no collaborative group work space on campuses (Richtek excepted).
- Management reports a dearth of laboratories, workshops and computer labs although more than 30% of courses at the college require use of these facilities.
- Based on the walk-through during assessment, Richtek campus has a modern facility with relevant equipment for students in skills programs.

Employer Engagement Findings

- The institution has some limited engagement with employers in the region but these relationships are not being actively developed due to staffing and resource constraints.
- No senior management team member is marketing the institution and finding opportunities for partnership with locally-based companies, relevant roles are split across functions and units.
- A Work Placement Office has been set up and staffed, however its 2 staff cater to a large population of students across all campuses; these staff are also asked to build new relationships with regional employers, for which they have neither the experience or time.

Career and Placement Services Findings

- Career advice and guidance is available to students upon entry to the institution and on an as-request basis afterwards.
- Specific advice such as mock interview practice, CV development is provided on an ad-hoc basis with programs run by Student Liaison Officers (SLOs) and frequency and student coverage varies by campus; some students reported no knowledge of these programs;
- The Work Placement Office has developed a resume bank which it uses to find suitable candidates as internship opportunities arise, this is useful and could be further enhanced;
- Umfolozi has advance commitments with public and private sector employers for internship placement and for work exposure for NCV students.

Retention, Completion and Alumni Services Findings

- Graduation and completion rates vary by program; preliminary data shows that while Report 191 Engineering has a relatively high completion rate (68%), annual completion rates are lower for Report 191 Business (42%) and for NCV (27%).²
- Less than 14% of the 2018 cohort of NCV students completed their studies within the three-year program time-frame.
- The College does not keep gender-disaggregated records on completion rates.
- First year drop out rate is estimated by management to be low. However, due in part to flexibility of enrollment policies, drop out rates are not tracked.
- South Africa’s bursary system allows students to not be employed while attending the institution full time; nearly 90% of students reported receiving bursaries.
- Umfolozi does not track alumni and was not able to provide information on employment or self-employment rates post completion. Alumni events are not held and there is no alumni association.

D. Summary of Recommendations

Strategy for Employability Recommendations

1. An institutional strategy for developing relationships with employers and providing career-related services for students to facilitate their transition into the job market is a requirement for tertiary education institutions. The strategy aligns the mission of the institution with employability and with provision of skills relevant to the labor market. Umfolozi should develop a strategy for employability and employer engagement, with targets for work placement of students by diploma stream and campus, supported by a detailed Action Plan.
2. The leadership team should obtain support for the employability strategy from the College Council and the regional DHET Office for KZN, presenting the Action Plan, timelines and requirements in terms of resources and financing to implement the strategy.
3. Consider creating a Vice Principal position with responsibility for employer relationships and careers, as is the practice at other TVETs in South Africa and in line with best international practices. There is potential to realign departments focused on external stakeholders, such as marketing, into this group.
4. Develop a system to monitor employment outcomes of students against targets set by the strategy and provide campus managers with incentives to meet targets. Incentives could consist of reporting to governance bodies on employment outcomes by campus.

² Preliminary, given challenges with Umfolozi’s records database and differences in the way in which enrolments are tracked per stream.

Quality and Relevance of Learning Recommendations

1. Identify methods employed by other TVET colleges to adapt the curriculum to students and employer needs, enhance job-readiness and increase employer participation in learning.
2. Identify partners to test new approaches, including the College Council, other TVETs and industry partners. Lobby DHET for curriculum flexibility and opportunities for additional engagement with employers. While outcomes are likely to materialize in the medium term, Umfolozi has an opportunity to lead in this space.
3. Engage employers in learning by introducing a program of guest lecturers and/or seminars on careers and work. Students are clearly lacking information while administrative staff and faculty are stretched. Guest lecturing and/or seminar opportunities will help to fill the gap.
4. Provide seminars on entrepreneurship and self-employment to all students in the college by expanding career services and guidance training already available from Student Liaison Officers and the Work Placement Office.
5. Find a solution to ensure students have access to computers outside of class time – this can be done with or without wifi connectivity.

Employer Engagement Recommendations

1. Engage at a strategic and senior level with employers in the region. This should be led directly by institution leadership and campus managers as part of the community engagement mandate of the institution.
2. Support employers to access to the campus through events and speaking engagements, and potentially to directly select students for internships.

Career and Placement Services Recommendations

1. Increase the number of WPOs and have one WPO available at each of the main campuses, in line with practices of other TVETs. Campus WPOs should be responsible for student placement as a primary function, while campus managers and College leadership build senior relationships with employers. If funds are limited, WPOs could be piloted on 2-3 campuses where managers are requesting a campus-based WPO and are closely engaged in placing students.
2. Create a map of key employers in the province, with hiring trends and information on skills requirements and upcoming staffing needs.

Retention, Completion and Alumni Services Recommendations

1. Set up a system to track employability and further education outcomes of Umfolozi alumni;
2. Once a tracking system is in place, leverage the alumni network for work placement for students, and offer guest speaking and mentorship opportunities to alumni. Building stronger links with alumni is a key opportunity to increase the linkages between the College, its community and regional employers.