

Initial reflections on implementing a data informed Integrated Student Success Strategy at the University of Johannesburg

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Introduction and context

Integrated Student Success initiative (ISSI)

Introduction

Conceptualized late in 2017

First iteration = first semester of 2018.

The ISSI is a data-informed student success initiative

Aiming:

- improve student success in selected priority modules by creating a partnership between Faculties and support staff and by focusing resources on addressing identified issues.

Context

- UJ has always taken student success seriously - FYE, SSE, Tutor to support student success.
- focused on the professionalization of teaching through promotion criteria and the PG Dip HE.
- UJ has traditionally measured the Module credit success rate.
- This rate has improved incrementally over time to about 86% from 75%.
- Means 86% of all undergraduate modules are passed at UJ.
- However this does not always lead to students completing their qualifications in minimum time (or M+1).
- Result - ADC (ADS) tasked to assist the institution with strategies to address the MCSR and the M+1 completion rates
- UJ MEC decided to make these improvements an official UJ priority (late 2017).
- result - the creation of the ISSI document outlining an institutional plan which has been approved by the SSC and the STLC.

Rules of progression: A case-study of B Com Accounting

- A hypothetical scenario is presented to illustrate how rules of progression impact on the minimum time completion rate.
- In this scenario, 100 first-time entering first year students registered for a B Com Accounting (B3A17Q) in 2013.
- The success rate in 2013 for three-year degrees was 82.4%.
- This cohort of students registered for 500 modules in the first semester. Five modules for every student:
 - Accounting 1A
 - Introductory Mathematical Analysis A
 - Business Management 1A
 - Commercial Law 1A
 - Economics 1A
- Based the 2013 success rate (82,4%), this cohort of students would have failed 88 modules or 17.6% of their first semester courses.

Enablers

Top management support

Institutional and Faculty structures to support the implementation and to evaluate student success efforts

Participation + involvement by **all relevant UJ staff**

A strengthening of student success related **data analytics and data informed decision-making processes** at the institution

Effective and expanded **online** support provision

Cross Faculty and division **partnerships** to enhance student success

Institutional structures

1. Student success committee (SSC)

- a sub-committee of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee and reports to STLC
- chaired by executive director Academic Development and Support
- All vice-deans teaching and learning

2. ADC ISSI Implementation Committee

- director ADC
- Management of ADC – HOD's and Unit coordinators

3. ISSI implementation teams.

- ADC staff –assigned to faculties
- (CAT, CASD and other)

4 Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees

Intervention planning and implementation

The ISSI implementation was guided by an internal measure called the **priority module index (PMI)**.

At Module level the PMI was used to identify and initiate action.

PMI gives an indication of where in the UJ system the most gains can possibly be made through interventions

Done by identifying modules –where greatest number of students are failing

Mainly been used to select modules to be included in the Intensive Revision Programme.

An **expanded and more contextualized response** to the identified Priority Modules was required which resulted in implementation of this PMI interventions in 2018



Priority module index

Successful credits S for module = $EC \cdot P$

where E is the number of enrolments

C is the average HEMIS credit for the module

P is the success rate for the module as %

Maximum successful credits for module = EC

It is found that 20% of the modules is causing almost 80% of the losses in successful credits (Pareto principle).

Focusing our attention on those modules having the largest number of failed credits, the upper 20% of these modules are considered to be priority modules – these modules turn out to have more than 2,5 failed credits.

PMI

Priority index of a priority module = $\frac{EC (1 - P)}{2,5}$

which ranges between 1 and 20 for UJ.

Bringing down the priority index for priority modules will see a dramatic rise in the ratio $\Sigma S/H$.

Initial reflections and feedback

First phase of implementation

- Identified top 5 priority modules for each Faculty (CBE - top 10 modules identified).
- PMI lists contained details of the 1st semester modules where the greatest numbers of funded credits were being lost in the 8 UJ Faculties.
- The initial Faculty PMI lists were distributed to the Vice Deans Teaching and Learning of the various Faculties
- Faculty PMI lists were finalized in discussions between the Director of ADC + Faculty representatives and initial Faculty plans were created in response to the PMI lists on the template provided by ADC.
- 41 Faculty plans served and approved by the first UJ Student Success Committee meeting
- November 2017.

Copy of Intervention plans by faculty

PRIORITY MODULE INTERVENTION FOR THE FIRST SEMESTER 2018

Johannesburg Business School

Department of Business Management

Faculty	CBE
School	Johannesburg Business School
Department	Business Management
Module name and module code	Business Management 1A (BEM11A2/BMA01A1)
Year and semester	First year (semester 1 and 2)
Potential problem areas identified within module	• Not all students have access to textbooks. • Difficulties with calculations.
Description of selected PMI interventions	• Option 1: IRP during the study week before the exams. • First year seminar and extended first year programme. • Provision of online revision material.
Evaluation plan of PMI interventions	• Determine whether students who are attending the IR classes pass the

Second phase of the ISSI

ADC created an ISSI Implementation Committee & ISSI implementation teams.

- ❑ teams met with majority of the departments on the Faculty PMI lists during the first quarter of 2018 to :
 - refine and finalise the departmental intervention plans and
 - define concrete implementation strategies.
- ❑ resulted in departmental interventions being initiated in the vast majority of modules during the first quarter with clear plans for second quarter implementation.

ADC Teams Summary plans

Plan	Date of meeting	Discussion	Actions
is a second year generic methodology module for the intermediate phase.	2 March 2017: Ronel Lang, Karen McCarthy, Andre van Zyl, Khayakazi Zitumane, Emily Mthembu, Kabinga Shabanza and Graham Dampier	The lecturer of this module indicated that students struggle with critical application in the exam. While they understand the content well, their problem is with providing their own insight into the problems of integrating theory and practice. They tend to regurgitate content. To counteract this, Ms Lang will use more case-studies to deepen student understanding of how theories impact on practice. Another problem with this module is that there is no methodology module in their first year. This is being addressed by re-curriculating the teaching studies module in first year so that it comes to assume a closer relationship to the second year module.	To assist with the process of developing lesson plans, a Wiki tool on Blackboard will be used to facilitate collaborations. The existing 10 groups will work together and peer assessment will be used to aid in measuring the work of students.
One of the problems is that students do not understand methodology in Year 1 and they struggle with the analysis lessons and the use of the critical lens/es to interpret practice. As the students teach actual lessons in the Fundamentals of Teaching school, we have to be rather strict about the process of lesson planning and presentation in order not to disadvantage the students.			Observations and reflections can be conducted on Blackboard as well. These can be assessed using peer evaluation.
A second issue is that there seems to be a disconnect between the people responsible for			Learning Development staff will assist with preparing students for the exam. This can take the form of...

Feedback and reflections

(Name) handled all of my complaints with speed and grace and went out of your way to help me.

I would like to commend her for your handling from start to finish.

I would highly recommend her and her department for students and academics alike.

Thanks (name), I could not speak more highly about you & how you get onto things immediately.

We are so lucky to have you. Thank you for everything you have done!!! It was a pleasure dealing with you and I wish you all the very best for the future.

I have recently had the pleasure and confidence of working with you to achieve an "A STUDENT" profile for my class and would like to pass on my thanks.



Feedback and reflections

Please pass on my gratitude to your colleagues as well.

Your efforts were fantastic and I would be glad that would be rewarded.

I would be most grateful if you could pass on my sincere gratitude to all who helped and especially (name) as he went on and above his duties by initiating this project and is definitely a credit to UJ at large.

As a result of this outstanding service I will be definitely be recommending career development to all my colleagues and friends.

Once again thank you"



Feedback and reflections

Confirmed that some lecturers did great work:

One lecturer developed youtube videos which enabled students to revise lectures as much as they needed to

Another lecturer included teaching critical thinking skills in his class (Accounting)

Another – tracked all repeating students and sent individual emails to them – monitoring



Feedback and reflections

Some modules slow to buy into this initiative

How we dealt with it? Made our intentions clear

Not:

A lowering of standards

A demand for improved performance

A handing over of the problem to the department

An erosion of academic freedom

- It is:

A focusing of resources on areas where the biggest difference can be made

A data informed approach to improving student success

A teamwork and activation approach to addressing student success related issues

A process that will be evaluated

Conclusion

The ISSI was successfully launched at the beginning of the year and

Success rate improvements at the end of S1 to be measured in PM's

the results have thus far been very satisfying.

With ADC taking the lead, UJ has responded to the various priority modules through thoughtful and integrated initiatives aimed at supporting and improving student success.

The Faculty staff have responded very well and many strong and effective partnerships have been formed.

The ISSI is well poised to make a positive impact on student performance at UJ where the greatest impact can potentially be made.

