2015 Quality Assurance report

15 July 2016

Overview:

2015 was our second year of conducting quality assurance with all stakeholders of the UCT Knowledge Co-op. We followed a two-tiered approach:

- **End-Of-Project-Evaluation:**
  Questionnaires sent out at or soon after completion of the project. The projects included
    a. Student theses at Honours and Masters level and a few undergraduate research reports. Here all stakeholders, i.e. community partners, students and academic supervisors are surveyed.
    b. A smaller number of short projects resulting from compulsory community service in IS Honours or Architecture 2nd year and Rapid Research by volunteer interns. In these cases no academics are involved in the partnership.

  Questionnaires assess stakeholders' satisfaction with their **experience** during the process, its **outputs** and the **involvement** of all partners. In a qualitative section respondents give feedback on the **most useful** aspect of the project and suggest **improvements**.

  22 projects were targeted; we received feedback from 5 Academics, 8 Community Partners and 18 Students. Over 95 of responses in the Quantitative section were in the *Agree* or *Agree strongly* category and the bulk of Qualitative comments were also positive. Generally feedback on the short projects was slightly less positive.

- **Impact assessment**:
  A questionnaire one year after completion of the project assesses any impact of the projects in the academic (publications, conference papers, further research) or practical arena (raise awareness, changed policy or practice, funding).
  We had very few responses to the questionnaire – including some questioning the value of the projects both academically and to the community partner. A follow-up email was sent to identify any academic outputs.

The following pages summarise the feedback received to both assessments.

1. End-Of-Project-Evaluation – thesis projects

All projects completed during the course of 2015 were included, as well as those that ended up to March 2016 due to deferred submission. Each stakeholder was sent a link to an online questionnaire to assess the following areas:

- **Outputs** – was the final project academically sound and did it address the community partner's need; did the student learn from the experience?
- **Experience** – satisfaction with the process and how it was supervised
- **Involvement** – the value of the partnership to all involved and their contribution to it.

There are 4 options for assessing each statement (*Agree strongly, Agree, Disagree, Disagree strongly*). In a qualitative section respondents give feedback on the most useful aspect of the project and suggest improvements.

a. Responses from academics: n = 5

OUTCOMES:
- Academics agreed that the outcomes of the projects were representative of significant academic research.
- Academics agreed that outputs were consistent with overall objectives of the projects.
- Academics agreed, but not strongly, with one disagreeing that expectations of project partners were met.

STUDENTS:
Academics agreed that:
- the projects improved student's ability to perform research, and developed students' insight into the nature of working with community partners;
- students received appropriate supervision; and
- students showed satisfactory commitment to the projects.

PROCESS:
- Academics agreed that participants seemed satisfied with how projects ran, and that forming of a partnership was beneficial to all partners.

COMMITMENT
- Academics agreed strongly that Knowledge co-op staff and community partners showed satisfactory commitment to project
- Academics agreed that they showed satisfactory commitment to the project.

THE MOST VALUABLE ASPECT OF THE PROJECT WAS:

- "the flexibility and openness of the community partner."
- "support of the Knowledge Co-op"
- "student's ability to do independent work and her passion to build relations with the community she worked with."

THE INITIAL PROJECT COULD HAVE BEEN IMPROVED IN THE FOLLOWING WAY:
- "clearer objectives"
- "project should start very early on in the semester, to allow more time"

FURTHER COMMENTS
- "projects should be presented at regular seminar series"

b. Responses from Community Partners: n = 4

OUTCOMES:

Community partners agreed generally that

- outcomes met their needs and were representative of significant academic research;
- the final project report was fairly understandable;
- outputs were consistent with overall objectives of the project.

STUDENTS:

- Community partners agreed that the projects improved student's ability to perform research, and developed students' insight into the nature of working with community partners.
- They agreed that students showed satisfactory commitment to the project.

PROCESS:

- Community partners agreed that participants seemed satisfied with how projects ran, and that forming of a partnership was extremely beneficial to all partners.
- They strongly agreed that supervisors and Knowledge co-op staff showed satisfactory commitment to the projects.

THE MOST VALUABLE ASPECT OF THE PROJECT WAS:

- "valuable to have thorough research and academic writing"
- "giving back data to assist this vulnerable group with recommendations"
- "an easy to use and understand document"

THE INITIAL PROJECT COULD HAVE BEEN IMPROVED IN THE FOLLOWING WAY:

- "more time to the project"
- "more involvement with the student and supervisor when it came to interpreting the findings and giving recommendations"
- "more feedback on progress"
- "I would have also liked to see the final protocol because after giving comments we never saw what were actually incorporated into the final protocol"
- "make the brief far more specific"

FURTHER COMMENTS:

- "valuable research for a very under -researched section of the sex work industry in Cape Town"
- "Overall - a win-win scenario! We were very happy with the final product and I think the student learnt even more about his chosen field"
- "A good academic thesis which has given the department of health valuable insight"

c. Responses from Students: n = 10

OUTCOMES:

- Students generally agreed that outcomes met their needs, with one student disagreeing.
- Students agreed that the outcomes of the projects were representative of significant academic research.
- Students generally agreed that outputs were consistent with overall project objectives and expectations, with one student disagreeing and another strongly disagreeing on expectations of project partners being met.

STUDENTS:
- Students agreed that the projects improved their ability to perform research, and developed their insight into the nature of working with community partners.
- Students strongly agreed that they received appropriate supervision.

PROCESS:
- Students agreed that participants seemed satisfied with how projects ran and that formation of a partnership was extremely beneficial to all partners; in each case one student disagreed.

COMMITMENT
- Students agreed that supervisors and community partners showed satisfactory commitment to projects, with one student disagreeing in each case.
- Students agreed that they themselves and Knowledge co-op staff showed satisfactory commitment to projects.

THE MOST VALUABLE ASPECT OF THE PROJECT WAS:
- "training opportunity also enabled me to learn new and improve on existing skills"
- "Learning to interact with community members outside of the university"
- "experience in interaction with the community partner"
- "contribute to relevant social issues with my research"
- "Understanding the strategies employed by organisations responding to issues of unemployment, poverty and inequality in the community"

THE INITIAL PROJECT COULD HAVE BEEN IMPROVED IN THE FOLLOWING WAY:
- "duration of the project was a bit longer"
- "deriving a more explicit goal"
- "I could have been in more communication with the community partner"
- "although it is great being part of a project that solves real problems, it does feel a bit like the community partner outsources a project and a student does it with no support really"

FURTHER COMMENTS:
- "I highly recommend this program to students looking to make effectual difference with their respective research goals"
- "if a project is to be called a collaboration then the community partner needs to be involved in more ways than just to say what they want and adding their thoughts at the proposal stage and then expecting a presentation."

2. End-Of-Project-Evaluation – Short Projects

These are unsupervised community service or Rapid Research projects.

a. Responses from Community Partners: n = 4

OUTPUTS:
- Some community partners disagreed with outputs meeting their needs and/or objectives and with student's developing insight into the nature of their work.

EXPERIENCE:

- Generally community partners agreed that the experience was satisfactory and their expectations being met, with one community partner disagreeing to their expectations being met.

INVOLVEMENT:
- Community partners were satisfied with the level of involvement of all partners involved in projects, with all agreeing, mostly strongly agreeing.

OPEN ENDED VIEWS:
- Generally community partners seemed to have appreciated the partnership with UCT and the brokering role that the Knowledge co-op was able to offer. Community partners would love to continue these relationships with UCT.
- Some community partners felt that a different kind of student with a different expertise would have better suited their needs, rather than the student they had.

b. Responses from Students: n = 8

OUTPUTS:
- Generally students agree that outputs met community partner needs, the student's themselves developed insights on working with communities and that overall outputs were consistent with objectives.

EXPERIENCE:
- Generally students agree that doing their project through the Knowledge co-op was a worthwhile experience, with only one student disagreeing.

INVOLVEMENT:
- Generally students agree that elements of involvement in the partnership were very strong from the involved participants in the partnership/collaboration.

OPEN ENDED VIEWS:
- Students felt that they contributed to the pressing needs of community partners, with most feeling that more timing would have better suited the projects.

From a survey with the whole IS Honours class these additional points emerged:
- Students felt that they were able to get a reality check and broaden their horizons and perspectives with regard to developmental issues facing South Africa.
- Don't underestimate, as the experience teaches you more than you learn in a lecture.
- Send students to organizations who are in real need of upskilling.
- Incentivize students to go to areas like Khayelitsha.
- More efficient stakeholder expectation management.
- Students felt the interaction and exposure to University students was a value point for the sponsors (community partners).
- Students felt that they added a lot of knowledge through them sharing some of their specialized knowledge; and that they inspired the children in the community groups with which they were involved.

3. Impact assessment

One year after completion we sent another Questionnaire asking for feedback on the impact of the project in the academic and community realm. Students were not included in this survey as most of them are no longer at UCT.

Only one academic and two community partners sent responses.

a. From the academic:

"I do not think the project had any impact, apart from training undergraduate students in research"

"It led very indirectly to a total factor productivity analysis of urban agriculture, which was presented at a conference and is in the process of being published as a journal article."

b. From Community partners

Important impacts of the project were:
*   to unite cultural groups at the school;
*   that sex workers were willing to share stories, and the that research findings were fed back to the community of survey
*   we had appearances in the local newspapers
*   We have re-drawn certain policies on gender equality, abuse
*   The project increased both partners' capacity to get project funding
*   We refer to the research findings, and this data enables us to use current research as part of our advocacy drive
*   Educators became aware of the divisions

c. Academic output survey

Due to very low return rates we subsequently requested feedback from each academic regarding publications or academic outputs from the projects they had supervised in the period 2011 to 2014. In total out of 19 projects for which we requested information we received feedback on twelve. The following Outputs were mentioned:
*   3 published articles[1]
*   One book chapter[2]
*   3 conference presentations by the academic supervisors[3]
*   One academic is continuing research with the community partner
*   A further student project to deepen the findings of a project
*   One student went on to do her PhD at St Andrews, Scotland in the same field.
*   This project created an awareness in both students, who were subsequently much involved in NGO initiatives. The real world experience helped prepare them for further opportunities: to receive mentoring in the Silicon Valley area, and a one month internship at a company.

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[1] W Barnett, G Patten, B Kerschberger, K Conradie, D B Garone, G van Cutsem, C J Colvin. Perceived adherence barriers among patients failing second-line antiretroviral therapy in Khayelitsha, South Africa. S Afr J HIV Med 2013;14(4):170-176. DOI:10.7196/SAJHIVMED.981; Boonzaier, F. & Squire, C. (forthcoming). Health as social citizenship: Rethinking health and social research in South African contexts. Journal of Health Psychology. Learmonth, D., Hakala, S. & Keller, M. (2015). "I can't carry on like this": barriers to exiting the street-based sex trade in South Africa. *Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine, 3*(1), 348-365.

[2] By D Learmonth on barriers to exiting the street-based sex trade in South Africa.

[3] Paper at the International Critical Psychology Conference, Grahamstown, 2015; presentations in Athens & New York.