

REFLECTION

The integration of the GBOK and then Global Capabilities Framework into curriculum development at the applied university: Cape Peninsula University of Technology (SA)

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In 2013 the Council of Higher Education (CHE) released a proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa: The case for a flexible curriculum structure (CHE: 2013). This study became the focal point for revisiting post-school curriculum but other factors also ensued. The Minister of Higher Education announced that SA higher education institutions should review curriculum to include a more flexible model in widening access, considerations for past injustices, addressing the low throughput and high dropout rates, etc.

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology, like most other South African higher education institutions commenced internal processes to address the criteria as outlined by the Minister and the CHE. The CPUT Teaching and Learning unit, i.e. Fundani, initiated various workshops and forums to aid in preparing academics for this re-curriculation process, which filtered to Faculty and Departmental responsibilities for review, reflection and initial application.

Benchmarking was one of the fundamental exercises as this alignment stemmed from the need to reflect on current knowledge, skills, qualifications, practices, etc. that are existing in the profession and in higher education both nationally and globally. Since our programme is accredited by PRISA and our academic staff are registered with the professional body, we actively engaged with the CEO and some other public higher education constituencies that offer qualifications in the public relations and communication, namely the University of Johannesburg, Durban University of Technology and Tswane University of Technology. These were the stakeholders involved in the initial reflection process but the influencers on the final curriculum extended beyond this group of academics.

In reflecting on the curriculum, and with the aim of aligning our offerings to international benchmarking, as an applied university we reviewed current trends and engaged with expert views on future influences on education, the profession and industries. We also reviewed the Pathways to the Profession as published by the Canadian Public Relations Society as this aligned strongly to our applied vision for our offerings. The Global Alliance's GBOK (Global Body of Knowledge) has a strong influence on the curriculum design as this led to the alignment of the graduate attributes for our offering.

The reflections expressed through the various research, expert views and Global Alliance platforms allowed us to witness the transformation of our industry and this was valuable in reviewing our curriculum and influence the fundamentals of our revised qualifications. In her term as PRISA president, the dearly departed and esteemed Prof Ronel Rensburg addressed members at the PRISA conference in 2012 on the discussions taking place at GA and how these trends and opinions will influence the industry. Thereafter she continues to represent South Africa as part of the GA team that contributed towards the Global Capabilities Framework.

The GBOK allowed the Public Relations Programme at CPUT to review our offering and graduate attributes to a global benchmark. This had a direct influence on the restructuring of our HEQSF aligned Diploma in Public Relations and Communication. The professional outcomes, skills and

expertise as identified by the GBOK allowed us to present alignment which supported our outputs and strengthened the need for the offering. With the formal output of the Global Capabilities Framework (GCF), it offered opportunities to align our new HEQSF aligned Advanced Diploma in Public Relations and Communication to the capabilities of professional in our industry. These strengthened the graduate attributes for our qualifications as here we were presented with a framework of professional capabilities for applied functioning in the public relations and communications industry. The GCF's three main capabilities of Communication, Organisational and Professional aligned to what was already present in the curriculum. The model presented in the sub-capabilities allowed for stronger alignment and also served as supporting evidence for the subjects we presented specifically in our Advanced Diploma.

The infographic is a light grey rectangular box containing three columns of text, each with a blue icon above it. The first column has a quote icon, the second has a building icon, and the third has a head-and-brain icon.

 Communication Capabilities	 Organisational Capabilities	 Professional Capabilities (those expected of any professional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To align communication strategies with organisational purpose and values • To identify and address communication problems proactively • To conduct formative and evaluative research to underpin communication strategies and tactics • To communicate effectively across a full range of platforms and technologies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate relationships and build trust with internal and external stakeholders and communities • To build and enhance organisational reputation • To provide contextual intelligence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide valued counsel and be a trusted advisor • To offer organisational leadership • To work within an ethical framework on behalf of the organisation, in line with professional and societal expectations • To develop self and others, including continuing professional learning.

Source: Global Alliance Framework available on Global Alliance website

The sub-capabilities are aligned to the subjects we presented for our Advanced Diploma in Public Relations and Communication, namely Public Relations Management, Communication Management, Applied Media and Business Project Management. The ILO (intended learning outcomes) of these subjects include aspects of the capabilities as identified through this framework. The Advanced Diploma is offered on the 4th year of studies and students are required to engage with more strategic and critical thinking activities which is aligned to a higher level of learning complexity.

We are thankful for the support received from PRISA, especially Adele Paulsen who was so hands-on involved in providing the necessary evidence and supporting documents that aided in a streamlined processes for the approval of our revised courses and offerings.

References

CHE (Council of Higher Education). 2013. A proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa: The case for a flexible curriculum structure.
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Global Alliance. 2018. Global Capability Framework.
<https://www.globalalliancepr.org/capabilitiesframeworks>