

Higher Education Institutions team up to review quality

Hitherto unheard of, national quality assurance agencies and higher education institutions in Namibia have teamed up to host the country's first-ever Quality Assurance Conference. It will take place from 27 – 29 August 2019, at Safari Hotel, Windhoek. The conference is appropriately themed "The Role of Quality Assurance Systems in Enhancing Higher Education Outcomes in Namibia".

The Conference is a joint partnership between the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA) and various tertiary institutions in the country.

UNAM's Director for Quality Assurance, Dr Ngepathimo Kadhila, remarked that "Such a conference has been long overdue and I look forward to sharing our UNAM specific experiences while at the same time learning from what others have done".

He further added that Quality has received increasing importance as the landscape of higher education experienced significant changes, some which are: increased international competition, increasing

demands of value for money, modern technologies that have entered the classroom, thus modifying the nature of the interactions between students and professors, etc. These changes in the higher education landscape require new methods of assuring and enhancing quality, but there has not been a major review done on the quality assurance practices in Namibia.

"You cannot use old tools to solve new challenges in today's business", he explained passionately. Further mentioning how quality lacks a clear definition, and how complex measuring quality is in a higher education context, "When a lecturer has taught, and the student claims to have studied, yet the result is poor, who is to blame? Do we put more pressure on lecturers to teach better, or do we demand that students work harder?"

"The State and the students also demand that the learning experience be worth their money", he added. These are fundamental issues that we need to interrogate and answer if we wish for the higher education system to live up to its purpose of enhancing the quality of student learning



experiences". "We need to come to a common understanding as a nation and choose the most reliable means to enhance and assess quality", remarked Dr Kadhila.

Targeted participants are ministries, senior government officials, the heads and management teams of QA agencies, leaders of universities and staff, practitioners' in quality assurance, agencies in HE institutions, researchers and academicians, professional bodies and civil society, Unions and industry representatives, as well as development partners.

For conference registration or enquiries please visit: <http://www.naqahec.edu.na>

Phoenix Project births Data: 360 Comms initiative

One of UNAM's most successful international partnerships with Cardiff University, the Phoenix Project, has had tremendous successes in various fields since inception some five years ago. Some notable work has been in Healthcare, IT, Road Safety as well as Environmental projects.

These successful projects seem to have spawned an initiative to build a global Quantitative and Qualitative Societal Transformation Network. "We will use the success of Phoenix to date as exemplar projects", remarked Professor Judith Hall, the Phoenix Project leader.

To that end, a seminar, dubbed the "Data: 360: Comms Networking Seminar" took place in Cardiff recently. A UNAM team consisting of the Vice Chancellor, Professor Kenneth Matengu, Dr Rachel

Freeman from the Social Work Section, Dr Jacob Sheehama from the School of Medicine and Ms Frauke Stegmann from Visual and Performing Arts attended the seminar.

The concept attempts to achieve Rapid Transformational Impact at National and Regional Scale. Cooperating countries include, Namibia, Wales and Zambia.

"It was an inspirational week and having Professor Matengu there along with the Namibian High Commissioner, Her Excellency Ms Linda Scott, was a tremendous bonus." remarked Professor Hall, further adding that, "I just received news after the seminar that I was successful in getting 8.6 Million Namibian Dollars for the development of Phoenix and the Data:360:Comms concept".



UNAM intern excels at NACSO Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP)

Victoria Amon has always been highly curious and passionate about environmental protection and keeping her surroundings clean. It was therefore not surprising when she opted to pursue a degree in the

Geography and Environmental studies field at the University of Namibia (UNAM), which Amon says has expanded her knowledge immensely and introduced her to a wide array of captivating environmental concepts.

Dedicated towards broadening her skills and knowledge horizons, Amon decided to apply for an internship opportunity at the Namibian Association of Community Based Natural Resource Management Support Organizations (NACSO) in 2018. "I thought to myself that it was an ideal opportunity for me to gain some work experience and learn new skills," Amon said.

The internship required her to form part of the Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP), which involves working with the NACSO and World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The programme saw Amon engaged in various work integrated learning activities such as attending wildlife expeditions,

game counts, conservancy annual audits, workshops and trainings, as well as writing success stories and articles which are posted weekly on the NACSO website. She also co-organized various events such as the annual Tourism Expo held in Windhoek.

Amon related that the CLP programme has sharpened her existing skills and helped her gain new ones. "One of the first things that CLP interns are required to do is attend workshops and trainings to familiarize themselves with the functions of the programme, that made it easier for me to execute my responsibilities effectively," said Amon. "I can confidently say that I have a better understanding about conservation and have improved

upon my overall communication skills all thanks to the internship," she further elaborated.

Amon encouraged students and graduates in similar fields to take up such opportunities, "the internship programme offers a diverse learning environment to learn from experts in the field and is especially good for graduates who want to improve their professional skills," she said. The two-year Conservation Leadership Programme (CLP) began in 2012 with the initiative to train young enthusiastic Namibian graduates to become future leaders in the Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) sector.

