

Ensuring Quality in Affiliated Health Training Institutions: Advanced Diploma Programmes in Botswana

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The University of Botswana through the Centre for Academic Development (CAD) is working with the Health Training Institutions in Botswana in promoting the quality of programmes and maintenance of quality standards.

The FNP Programme offered at one of the Health Training Institutions is a good example of programmes that are moving towards quality and excellence. Through the process of programme review and validation, the programme has evolved from one year to 18 months and has now been approved to move into a four semester format, ready for implementation in academic year 2007/08. However with all these changes, the Nursing Education system in the country is still struggling to recognize this programme at an appropriate level which has been equated to FNP Masters programmes elsewhere. Through the comparative analysis of this programme and those at the University of Botswana, it was discovered that to complete a BNS programme, an FNP graduate will have to complete only three semesters (45 credits) of the basic sciences and liberal arts. On the other hand, to complete the masters' programme, an FNP graduate will only have to do an in-depth research, nursing theories, and statistics.

The Advanced Diploma in Community Health Nursing is another example of a programme which has proved to be moving toward quality and excellence. The programme is one of those recently being analyzed to determine its quality and equivalence to university level programmes with a view to find possible ways for

articulation. The purpose is to explore the possibility of enabling graduates of the programme to transfer credits, challenge examinations, or be exempted from retaking some of the courses when they apply to further their education at the University of Botswana. Based on the findings of the sub-committee of Assessment, Credit Recognition and Transfer (ACRaT), the Advanced Diploma in Community Health Nursing” just like the FNP programme was found to be comparable to university programmes. As such it was proposed that

- The Advanced Diplomas in Nursing offered at Health Training Institutions should be transformed into professional bachelor’s degrees.
- The current Advanced Diploma in Nursing be immediately and effectively reviewed against International Standards to accord direct entry to Masters as appropriate
- The diploma holders from these programmes should be allowed entry into degree programmes through prior learning assessment, which may include exemptions, challenge examinations, credit transfers etc.

These recommendations are awaiting joint discussions, further review and development of the background and modalities by the Nursing Department at the University of Botswana and the Health Training Institutions. External reviewers/examiners agree that the advanced diplomas at the Institutes of Health Sciences such as Advanced Diploma in Family Nurse Practice and Advanced Diploma in Community Health Nursing are at a very high level. In fact, some graduates have been admitted straight into master’s programmes abroad.

However, it is only now that the University of Botswana is trying to put some value on the credits earned by these diploma holders. Academic Regulations at the University are being revised in preparation to accommodate proposed articulation of such programmes with university ones, and to be inline with the current developments in institutions of higher learning globally. The search for greater “programme articulation” is therefore perceived as the quest for the creation of more academically sound flexibility and options for advanced diploma graduates from Affiliated Institutions to access the University of Botswana’s programmes.