

TECHNIKON SA

PROGRAMME GROUP: ENGINEERING

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO ACCESS AND SUCCESS

1. Introduction

South Africa has a shortage of skilled engineers and engineering technicians and technologists currently. Over the last number of years this shortage has been aggregated by a number of factors, one of it being insufficient numbers of students in these disciplines.

Technikon SA has recognised this shortage a number of years ago and has introduced various projects to address the problem.

2. Overcoming Barriers to Access

Residential technikons are not in the position to accept all the engineering related applications they receive, due to a number of factors, such as a lack of resources, limiting the available seats.

Because Technikon SA is a distance education technikon it is not limited by seats, and can accept all applications, regardless the history of the students.

3. Overcoming Barriers to Success

Experience has shown that the academically strong students study full time at universities and residential technikons. It is thus normally the students who need more academic support to ensure success that ends up studying at Technikon SA.

4. Challenges That Had To Be Addressed

4.1 Comprehensive Training

Engineering studies comprises three aspects, namely theoretical studies, the subject related laboratory work and experiential training. Although Technikon SA is a distance education institution all three these aspects must be addressed to ensure quality tuition to our students and to deliver well qualified graduates.

4.2 Ensuring Success

Because of the academic challenges our students have, and due to limited contact time between lecturers and students, Technikon SA had to develop alternative solutions to enhance the throughput of our students.

5. The Future

With the upcoming merger between Technikon SA and Unisa it is anticipated that the full range of engineering qualifications will be available in future. This will include the current National Diplomas and B-, M- and D Tech degrees, as well as B-, M- and D Eng.

6. Conclusion

Technikon SA has proven that it is possible to offer engineering studies through distance education. The new merged institution, Open Learning University of South Africa, will be able to play a major role in provided the much-needed human resources in the engineering discipline for our country.