

APPENDIX I

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON UNIVERSITY TEACHING METHODS FINAL REPORT

The Advisory Committee of Methods of Teaching in Higher Education was set up at the request of the Vice-Chancellor, in July 1974. For the previous two years a number of inter-college meetings have taken place aimed at developing interest and concern among staff for the methods of teaching and assessment that they employ. The setting up of this committee gives a formal status to this aspect of higher education which is now beginning to receive increasing attention abroad. It is at the moment perfectly possible for a lecturer to teach his subject with no training or help being given with his methods of teaching. Such a system encourages the individual to retreat into the security of the known, that is, to teach in the way he was taught. The aim of this Committee has been to offer a way out of this dilemma by making suggestions, which, if followed, should go some way towards offering a service to staff which is designed to help with difficulties, disseminate ideas and techniques, assist with criteria of teaching performance, and conduct research.

We have been encouraged by the support given by staff to the various meetings that we have held. This points to a considerable reservoir of interest. This interest should be cultivated and developed. A number of significant changes have been made in our final report in the light of comments gathered from the various school meetings which considered our interim report. The response of the various schools to our report varied from the detailed, and critically helpful comments of the School of Agriculture, the Polytechnic and Joint Schools of Technology, Business and Liberal Studies and Board of Governors staff, the School of Science through the lukewarm response of Law, Arts and Education to the brief and highly critical comments of the School of Social Science.

It does appear that our comments on staff development and the question of teaching performance stirred up a veritable hornets' nest which in some cases precipitated the rejection of all twenty-one sections of the report. We are obviously faced with a public relations problem in grasping such controversial nettles. It is our belief that we did not exceed our terms of reference in considering staff development. Improving teaching methods is after all part of the process of staff development; if teaching performance is a criterion for promotion, who is better to comment on this than the UTM Committee? A number of the important recommendations of our committee seem to have been misunderstood. This does point to the considerable task of education training and staff enlightenment which faces any future UTM Committee. Our emphasis is to rely on the development of commitment through persuasion. In this we demonstrate a change in emphasis has resulted from our examination of the comments received from schools.

Terms of Reference

As set out in the Vice-Chancellor's letter of 7 June 1974 Stencil 9216: "This advisory committee will be concerned with teaching methods throughout the University, but will also pay attention to such problems as contact hours, which are related issues".

Membership of the Committee

Chairman:	Mr. P.H. Chiwona (Dean of Education)		
	Dr. T. Edje (Bunda College)		
	Mr. M. Montgomery (Polytechnic)		
	Mr. F. Robinson (Polytechnic)		
	Professor H.M. Cundy (Chancellor College)		
	Mrs. B. Roloff	"	"
	Mr. M. Caslake	"	"
	Dr. B.H. Harawa	"	"
	Mr. R.B. Garrib	"	"
Secretary:	Mr. A.P. Green		

Proposals

1. STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF THE UNIVERSITY TEACHING METHODS COMMITTEE

Structure

1. The Committee should be a committee of Senate.
2. The Committee should be made up as follows:
 - (a) One representative elected from each school, plus one from the Polytechnic, Board of Governors, chosen by the staff.
 - (b) The Committee should have the power to co-opt.
 - (c) The Chairman should be the Vice-Chancellor or his nominee.
 - (d) The normal term of office is two years.
 - (e) Continuity would be maintained by making the first elections for the schools of Agriculture, Arts, Education, and Law, stand for one year only. This would improve the likelihood of a core of four or five members persisting through an election period.
3. The need for activity at College level is recognized. To organize this by schools would mean the proliferation of too many small groups some of which would serve a handful of staff e.g. Law and Public Administration and Arts. The following suggestion is made:

Bunda	A single College Committee
Polytechnic	A single College Committee which has specialist divisions within it: (a) Technology (b) Business and Liberal Studies.
Chancellor	A single College Committee which has specialist divisions within it: (a) Science (b) Arts, Law and Public Administration, Education, Social Science.

The responsibility for the establishment and operation of college committees should rest with the UTM Committee members in each college in consultation with the principals.

Function

The Committee should be free to consider its functions and gain approval for proposals through Senate. As a guideline the following functions are suggested:

1. Organizing courses, lectures and demonstration.
2. Liaison with College groups.
3. Consideration of principles of student work load and assessment.
4. Co-ordination and stimulating research.
5. The Committee should have the responsibility of identifying and publishing a list of individuals with special skills who are prepared to be available for advice.
6. It is not necessary or appropriate to spell out the functions of the college committees. This is better decided at college level in response to felt needs.

2. DEVELOPING THE QUALITY OF STAFF TEACHING

1. Newly Appointed Staff

The Committee considers that more thought needs to be given to this period in a lecturer's career. It is in the interest of the University to improve the standards of teaching of a lecturer at the beginning of his work, and also to assist him over the difficulties that he is likely to meet in his early years as a lecturer. To this end we recommend:

- (a) An agreed programme for the orientation of all new staff. This should include some kind of introduction for expatriate staff into the local customs, traditions, culture and language of Malawi.
- (b) That Heads of Departments should see it as part of their duties to assist and guide newly appointed staff with teaching methods and associated work. Heads of Departments may wish to delegate this responsibility to experienced and sensitive staff within their departments. This could evolve into a system of mentors. Such an individual would assist him where appropriate in professional matters. The mentor system is already used to assist newly arrived staff with domestic and associated concerns. It is felt that while the "mentor" should maintain contact with his Head of Department in this matter, his main role is to assist the new member of staff rather than to report to his Head of Department.
- (c) Heads of Departments may wish to avail themselves of the Services of the specialists identified by the UTM Committee, in assisting a new staff member.
- (d) The new Committee needs to give thought to the function and control of the probationary period for newly appointed local staff. A probationary period does not exist for expatriate staff.

2. Other Staff

- (a) The Committee should have the responsibility for developing an on-going scheme for reviewing teaching methods, offering advice, and mounting short UTM courses in accordance with the functions of the UTM Committee as set out in No. 1 Functions above.
- (b) Newly appointed staff would benefit from a staff handbook. Such a handbook would require regular up-dating, and might include such things as: University History, Committee Structure, Library and Archive facilities, Computer and Research, Administration procedures, Assessment System, Student Affairs,

Disciplinary arrangements, Promotion Procedures, etc.

3. TEACHING ABILITY AS A FACTOR IN PROMOTION OR ESTABLISHMENT IN POST

Teaching ability should be an important criterion when considering promotion or establishment in post. It is suggested that there should be a mechanism whereby, staff can offer evidence of effective teaching as one of the criteria for promotion or establishment. It is up to the member of staff concerned to request a report from say two appropriate experts as identified in the list. The applicant's mentor and Head of Department may also contribute.

A future UTM Committee may wish to draw up a form to be used in presenting the report. This form should detail relevant aspects of teaching.

4. ACADEMIC CONSULTANTS/EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

Where possible academic consultants should be utilized more fully as sources of advice in the area of teaching methods. Specific reference to a concern for teaching methods should be made when drawing up the terms of reference for academic consultants/external examiners.

5. COURSE OBJECTIVES, SYLLABUSES AND COURSE OUTLINES

It is considered desirable that for courses, staff should provide students with:

- (a) A statement of course objectives.
- (b) A syllabus or a more detailed course outline.
- (c) Guidelines on the way in which the course will be assessed.

6. TEACHING METHODS CURRENTLY EMPLOYED

The Committee is aware of the necessity to comment on the methods of teaching currently employed and requests, permission and co-operation from departments to investigate along these lines and make recommendations. We consider that greater co-operation between related departments in the three colleges over curriculum development and teaching methods should be strongly encouraged.

7. FEED-BACK FROM STUDENTS ON THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The Committee recognizes the difficulty of obtaining information from students about one's own teaching. We therefore commend attempts to gain information from students in a more formal possibly anonymous way, by the use of questionnaires. A sample questionnaire has been prepared for interested staff to use or modify to fit their own particular needs.

8. STUDY SKILLS

The Committee has noted the development of study skills programmes for first year students. We wish to support these efforts and would like to suggest that the UTM Advisory Committee could act as a common meeting place to share experiences.

9. CONTACT HOURS

The Committee considered the matter of contact hours and as a result of some consultation with other members of staff came to the following tentative conclusions:

1. The present regulations limiting student contact/load hours in years one and two are working reasonably well at Chancellor College. The regulations should, however be reviewed, expressed unambiguously

and re-circulated.

2. An attempt should be made to extend the scheme to years three, four and five, since it is in these groups that most disparities occur.
3. A general view expressed by a number of staff is that students are over-burdened with formal work and have little or no time for additional reading or investigation. Particular problems stem from a lack of co-ordination in the assignment load and the timing of assignments by different subject areas. It has also been pointed out to us that the practice of some departments in giving extensive terminal tests tends to lead to students devoting an inordinately large share of their time to the subject that they know is to be currently tested.
4. It does appear that our students do have a far higher formal work load than in other neighbouring institutions.
5. We would like to suggest that the transition from the learning ethos of the secondary school towards that of the more independent methods of study employed in the University has been in large part made by the end of the second year. We therefore consider that the end of the second year should mark a distinct shift towards a reduction in the contact hours that our students experience. Such a shift will have obvious implications for the methods of teaching that we employ.
6. Any reduction in the contact hours demanded, could be expected to lead to the possibility of expanding numbers without a parallel increase in the teaching establishment.
7. There is a need for an inter-college enquiry into the subject of contact hours before any decisions are reached. Such an enquiry would need also to consider the problem of the over-burdened curriculum.

10. RESEARCH

We recognize the importance of mounting research programmes concerned with teaching and associated matters. Obvious areas include: classroom techniques, student difficulties, language and communication, evaluation of teaching, assessments.

11. A/V FACILITIES AT INDIVIDUAL COLLEGES

The Committee notes the following:

1. Duplication of expensive apparatus in different departments.
2. Difficulties with servicing.
3. Proliferation of different makes.
4. Certain pieces of apparatus appear to be under-utilized.

Difficulties could be overcome in each College by:

- (a) A centralized store of certain of the more expensive pieces of equipment, linked to a projection/technical service, and an inventory of equipment held by departments. It is of interest to note that such a system is successfully operated at the Polytechnic.
- (b) The recruitment of a technician with electronics experience to care for such a system. This is regarded as a priority. A sharing arrangement with the science workshops, A/V, and language laboratories, might be necessary in order to ensure full utilization of such a technician.
- (c) Closer control over the placement of orders. This would assist towards the desirable end of greater standardization with the resultant economies in spares.

Closed Circuit Television

A grant sufficient to purchase a useful and versatile two camera system, has been received from the Schimmelpennick Campbell Trust. The equipment is to be housed at Chancellor College, and administered by the Education Department.

A/V Work at Individual Colleges

We note that the Polytechnic has already embarked upon the creation of a work-room, where staff may prepare teaching materials. The lessons learned from this venture could well be beneficial to the other Colleges.

12. DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIA-RESOURCES CENTRES

Agreement has been reached between Chancellor College and the University Librarian for the establishment of a Media-Resources Centre as an extension of the Library's service. The early development of this centre is with preparation, cataloguing and issue of non-printed learning materials intended primarily for teaching use. Such materials as charts, pictures, film strips, films, tapes and gramophone records, will, with the agreement of departments be processed and centralized. This service should provide useful assistance to staff who are considering the increased use of teaching aids in their work. This Committee warmly welcomes this development and looks forward to the opportunity of assisting and advising in such ways as the University Librarian considers appropriate. The Polytechnic and Bunda College might usefully consider whether such a scheme could be of advantage to them.

13. EXPERTS APPOINTED BUT NOT NECESSARILY ON THE COMMITTEE

- (a) Assessments.
- (b) A/V.
- (c) Classroom Technique.
- (d) Objectives and Planning.
- (e) Technical/ Laboratory and Fieldwork.
- (f) Literature, dissemination Publications and bibliographies.
- (g) UTM courses.
- (h) Language communication and speech.

Signed: J. Caslake, P.H. Chiwona,
Dr. T. Edge, M. Montgomery,
B. Roloff, A.P. Green

APPENDIX 2

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