**SUBMISSION IDENTIFIERS:**

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| **Title** | Proposal for review of principles and process for closure of disciplines |
| **Author & Position** | Dr AP Matthews, Institutional Forum Academic Staff Representative for College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science |

**APPROVAL HISTORY**

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| **Structure consulted** | **Target date for discussion** | **Date approved** |
| Institutional Forum | 7 Sep 2015 |  |
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**SUBMISSION CONTENT**

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| **Motivation:**  The question of the process for closure of disciplines has arisen due to a query about the closure of the disciplines of Afrikaans, German and Italian. This matter, to the best of my knowledge, has not formally served at Senate as an agenda item, but Prof Alant, Senate academic staff representative for the School of Arts, has raised the matter twice in Senate under other agenda items. I am the Senate academic staff representative for the School of Chemistry and Physics, so I was present when the matter was raised.  Considering that the matter is clearly of concern for the Senate academic representative of the School that houses the affected disciplines, and in view of it being in part a matter of process that does not appear to have been settled to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, it seems a worthwhile issue to raise in the Institutional Forum. The central issue addressed here is process, and it is a general issue beyond the matter of the three languages because the factors could apply to any discipline in the university. The accompanying “Decision Flow Document”1 sets out the UKZN guidelines for academic decisions.  The current College Model with multidisciplinary schools is based on the 2010 college model review2. In its recommendation 5: “Discipline-based arrangements within schools”, the statement is made that “There is no intention that disciplines be swallowed up, but rather that the integrity of disciplines be protected and form the basis of whatever arrangements are made to promote effective and efficient programme delivery and research.”  It may thus be argued that disestablishment of a discipline is restructuring or reorganisation of a School, and should fall under guideline (1.1) “… reorganisation of Schools” which must be recommended by the School Board, by the CAAB (College Academic Affairs Board), by the CMC (College Management Committee) if there are resource implications, and by Senate, and finally approved by Council. However, there appears to be some ambiguity because the guidelines preamble states: “… restructuring of Schools … [is] approved at Senate and noted at Council.”  Whichever interpretation is correct, the guideline is that reorganisation of a School must be approved by Senate, and either approved or noted by Council. It should be recommended by a School Board, and approved by the CAAB.  As a matter of principle, and speaking as an academic, disestablishment of a discipline is a fundamental change to a university, and should take place through a democratic process of wide consultation. Furthermore, it impacts academics in those disciplines, in which case the guidelines require that the JCF must be consulted.  Furthermore, guideline (2.4) states that discontinuation of qualifications or programmes must be recommended by a School Board, approved by the CAAB and noted by Senate. Closure of a discipline implies discontinuation of the discipline’s major and Honours, which are programmes as defined by Government Gazette3: “A programme is a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification. Programmes may be discipline-based, …[with] recognised entry and exit points. …[and] a core component and may have a fundamental and or elective component depending on the purpose of the programme or the qualification.”  Prof Alant, to the best of his knowledge, affirms that the decision to disestablish Afrikaans, German and Italian has not served as an agenda item at the School of Arts Board, nor at the CAAB, nor at Senate, but was taken by the CMC.  This raises a query: What is the appropriate process for closure of a discipline? Is this the responsibility of the CMC alone, or of the School Board, CAAB and Senate? In the guidelines there is no category of decision assigned to the CMC alone, and a general principle is: “Decisions delegated to a [CAAB] or School Board may be further delegated to an existing subcommittee or officer to act on behalf of the Board. …However the accountability for such decisions cannot be delegated and the delegatee should refer any complex or potentially contentious decisions to the parent body for discussion.”  Perhaps there has been a misunderstanding or miscommunication, but the fact that some academics are still contesting the matter warrants attention. It is essential at UKZN that important decisions undergo consultation with all affected parties and are accepted by all parties to have followed due process. The thesis of this motivation is that closure of any discipline is reorganisation of a School and therefore should go through process (1.1) in the guidelines, or, if not approved by Council, then at least proposed by the School Board for the discipline, and then approved by CAAB and Senate and noted by Council. The UKZN guidelines on academic decision flow do not indicate that such a decision should be made by a CMC.  **Note:** An additional element of process is that, in accordance with the UKZN statute, a CAAB must have one elected academic from each school in the college. If not, then it is not properly constituted. This is mentioned here because I have never been aware that academics are required to elect a representative to a CAAB, so it is possible that this is a statutory requirement that for some reason has not been implemented in all the CAABs.  **Proposal:** In the matter of closure of the disciplines of Afrikaans, German and Italian in particular, and considering principles and process for closure of disciplines in general, the IF should:   1. Consult with appropriate authorities to confirm the correct decision flow for this type of matter, specifically whether it should be approved by Senate and noted at Council, or approved by Council, or whether it is a matter for CMC approval only. 2. Taking into account the answer to (1) above, consult with appropriate authorities to confirm whether there has been any omission in due process leading to closure of the three languages. 3. If any steps have been omitted, then the IF should recommend to Senate that the situation be remedied by the missing steps being enacted. In any case, if deemed appropriate, the IF may decide to place this matter on the agenda of Senate. The desired outcome is that all affected parties are satisfied that due process and consultation have taken place.   **Notes and References:**  1Delegation of Academic Decisions by the Senate and Council: Guidelines for Decision Flow of Academic Matters CO/15/2208/08” (1 Jan 2012)  2External review of the College model: Report of the review panel to the Vice-Chancellor and Council (12 Oct 2010)  3Government Gazette (2 Aug 2013) Vol. 578 No. 36721 p 46 |
| **Financial implications:** Nil. |
| **Attachments:** Nil |