

Awareness and Perception of Students on the Support Services Provided by the Faculty of Natural Sciences

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Abstract

According to the data gathered from BSc graduates in early 2020, a large percentage of BSc undergraduates are between the ages 20-30, either full time or part time employed and about 50% are married. Thus, the issues faced by these undergraduates are different to those faced by full time students in conventional Universities. Added to this is the ODL mode of delivery followed at OUSL. Having identified this fact, the Faculty of Natural Sciences has introduced several student support systems to undergraduates. The objective of this research was to find out about the awareness and following that, the perception of students regarding these support services. And based on the results identify strengths, weaknesses in existing support systems and identify areas which need new systems of support with the long-term view of reducing the rate of dropouts.

Ten issues that could lead to student dropout were identified. Namely: Difficulty to adapt to ODL method of study, feeling isolated and demotivated, language related issues, ragging issues, timetable related issues, leave related issues, financial issues, Programme delivery/ Subject related issues, academic counselling and finally personal problems. Two of the above issues were considered out of reach of Faculty intervention, those being: leave related issues and personal problems. Some form of student support was already in place for the other 8 issues, such as EfIL, PASS, academic counselling, flexibility in time tabling, availability of lesson material in all three languages at L3, OUSL counselling unit, university bursaries, anti rag squads etc. The questionnaire was designed to see if students are aware of the existing support systems, the students perception of how good the support system is and then their views on how to improve upon the existing. It is being designed as a google questionnaire to be given to students at L3 and L5 in the second semester. The questionnaire has yet not been given to students. It is planning to obtain student feedback and analysis the results and present at the next AAOU conference.

Key words: *Faculty of Natural Sciences, student support*