



“Design is Everything”

*Curriculum and the Teaching-Learning Strategy:
where do we intend to go?*

Prof RJ Balfour

DVC Teaching and Learning

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Strategy revision is an opportunity to re-think the **NWU's Curriculum Plan**

All Faculties of the NWU possess 5 year **Faculty Integrated Teaching-Learning Plans** in which new and other curriculum development is entailed. The FITLPS contain the Faculty Vision for T-L, planning for multimodal learning, new programmes as well as initiatives linked to the transformation of the curriculum.

Together these FITLPS constitute the **NWU's Curriculum Plan**.

The T-L Strategy is thus the way in which we describe for ourselves what **features (attributes, student experience)** within curriculum we would like to see at which **levels of complexity (years of study)**, and to what **purposes (outcomes, skills, competencies, knowledge-sets or combinations)** across all FITLPS.

The T-L Strategy is thus a “**compass**” for the “**maps**” that are the plans: the **Strategy provides direction**, the **Plans map the terrain to be covered** and the **journey is the curriculum's origin, course, and destinations**.

Re-thinking the T-L Strategy entails asking questions anew and afresh about the curriculum not as simply parts of the whole, but as the whole:

1) What does it mean to teach in the 21st Century?

- a) World view of the academic
- b) Knowledge and its purpose in the world
- c) Teacher (academic) identity (professional requirements & institutional requirements
- d) Communities of practice as autonomous self-regulating, but also accountable

2) What does it mean to learn in the 21st Century?

- a) World view of the student and the world of work
- b) The Millennials (Twenge, 2006) and Castell's (1999) notion of the "space of flows": knowledge vs information
- c) Skills of discernment (Kress 2011) or criticality needing to be integrated with a commitment to ethicality and care in, and of community/ environment
- d) The mobile complex (Cook, Pachler, Bachmir: 2011) and the importance of context (Scotland, 2014)

3) How has knowledge, the nature and characteristics of knowledge formation, communication and the expectations concerning the purpose of knowledge, changed between the 20th and 21st Century?

What we've got: NWU TL Strategy (2016 – 2020)

- Original drivers that informed the 2016-2020 TL Strategy shape and scope
 - **External drivers:** HE policy changes, national and international trends, market directions
 - **Internal drivers:** NWU 2005 Statute; NWU Strategy (2015-2025) – dream, purpose, success model, competitive strategy, strategic agenda; Transformation of teaching and learning project.
- In developing the new Strategy we are building on the important fundamental elements of the 2016-2020 TL Strategy to take forward into the future.
- We do need to re-think and refine our TL strategic vision within our new context and structure, and with a greater focus on the **coherence and responsiveness, and the transformation of the NWU curriculum.**

Our mandate as traditional University

- Institutional type (traditional vs comprehensive vs technology) should have an effect on teaching and learning, as different kinds of knowledge require specific ways of being taught and different ways of learning, how curriculum is developed and organised and what attitudes, values and practices are cultivated.

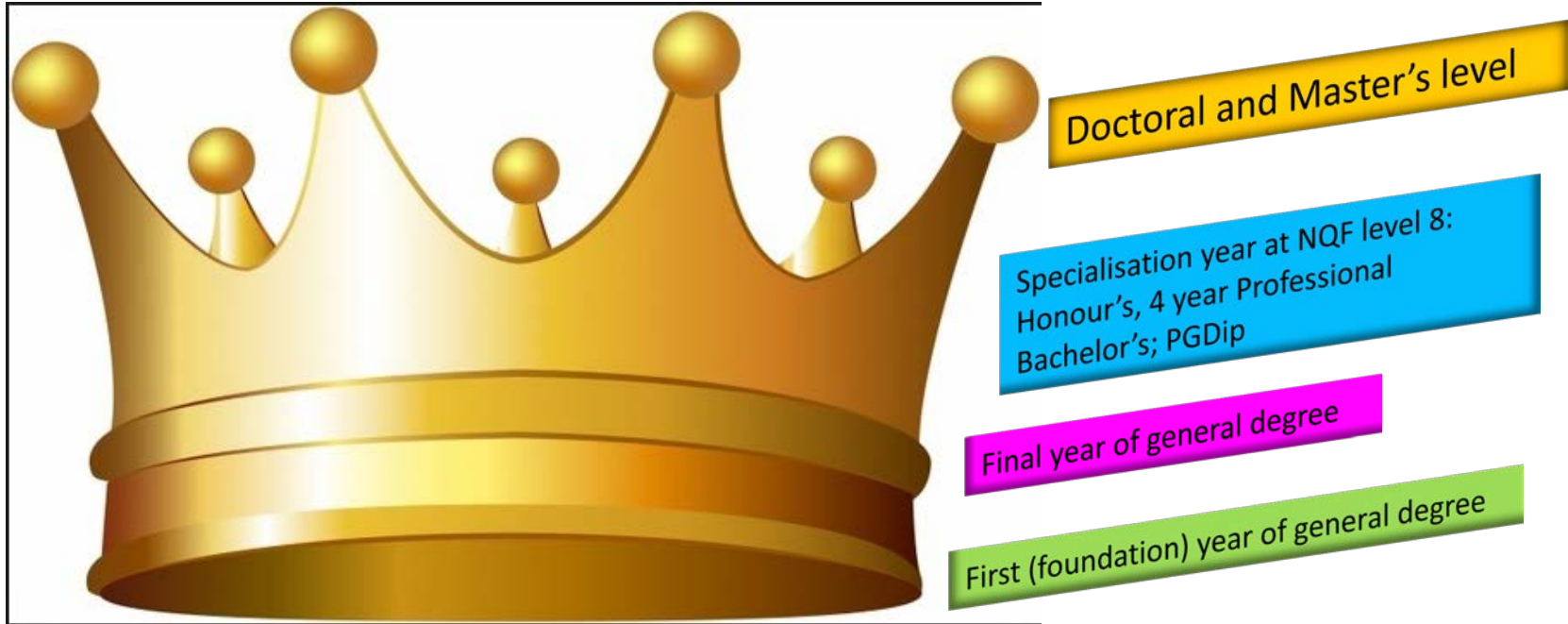
Traditional University – in the more traditional character of teaching and research, offering qualifications from the undergraduate to doctoral level, qualifications with a strong focus on general formative education, professional, and postgraduate education, especially research activities

Question: How should this impact our TL Strategy, our social responsibility, the nature and scope of our formal and non-formal academic offering, especially as the university with the second largest number of students in South Africa?

Strategy development is an opportunity to re- think the assumptions made about education: **What are the purposes of higher education?**

- 1) Higher education is a **personally transformative** experience focused on the individual as part of a community of learning. That learning enables intellectual growth towards the creating and enhancing the community and workplace, leading, following, and cherishing civic responsibilities and rights. It concerns growing in learning that adds value to science for the community, the State, and the world;
- 2) Higher education is **academically transformative**: it should lead to the development of understanding of knowledge, and to the construction of new knowledge. It should create an awareness of the deep links between knowledge, community and society, such that it develops critical thinking, sophisticated conceptual and practical skills;
- 3) Higher education is **socially transformative**: it contributes to the common good of communities, it focusses on sustainability, community and workplace leadership, work creation, a concern with social issues, poverty, inequality. A cherishing of values that support the dignity of the person, the solidarity of people, and a deep commitment to care for the environment and ethical-life example.

Higher education is metaphorically like the “crown” (or culmination) of formal learning



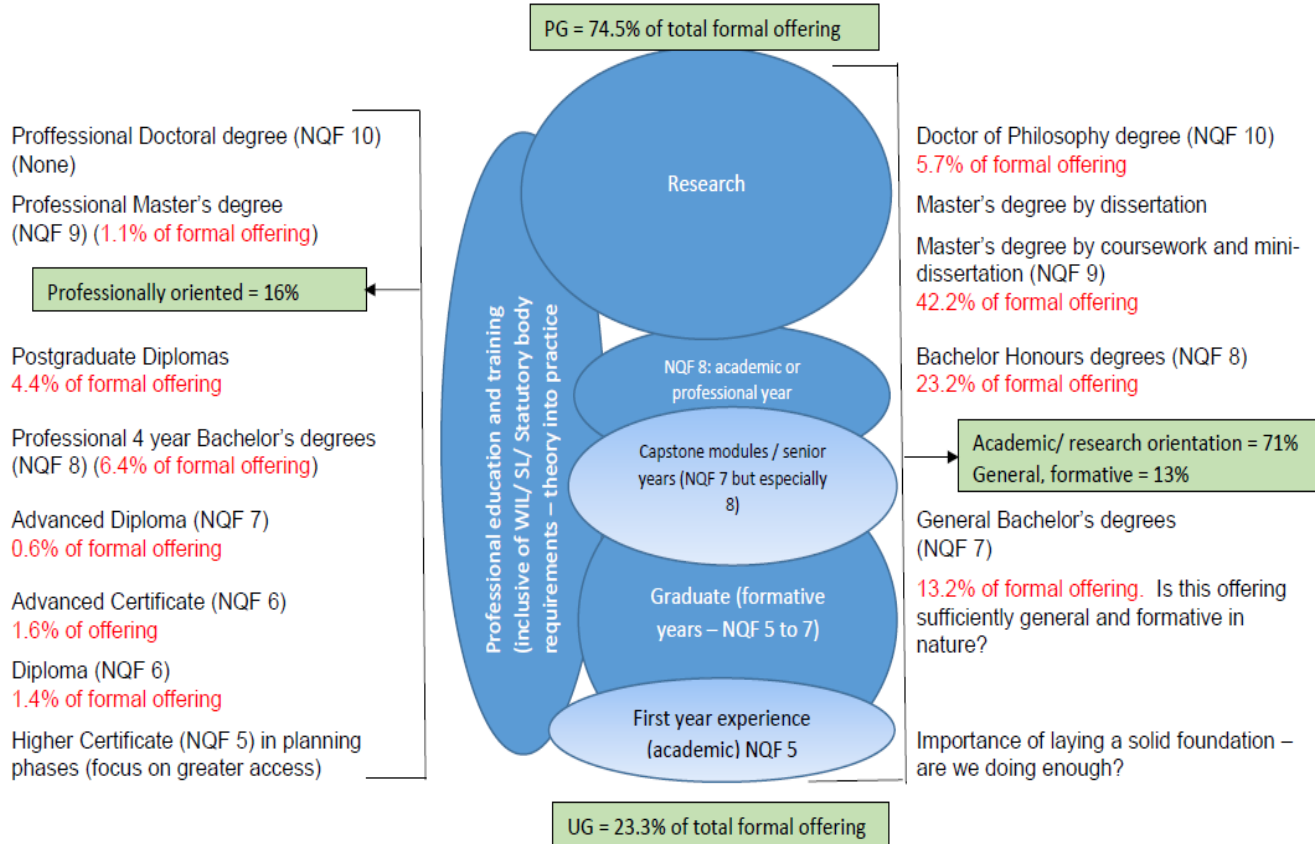
Features of the **crowns as education metaphor** in the NWU Curriculum Change Process

- 1) The **first year** of post-school studies at universities in South Africa is a special year characterised by transitions from school to university, and by inductions into university life and the NWU way. The curriculum associated with this year should cohere horizontally as well as vertically, and focused strongly on literacy-enhancement, calibrated to students' different needs/ capacities across the curriculum.
- 2) The **first and second year** are formation years: over-specialization, too early on, should be avoided as per advice also received from DHET in relation to the NWU PQM in 2019. More focus should be given to general formation and appropriate assessment.
- 3) The **third/ fourth year** are summative years, and should cohere horizontally as well as vertically. The final year of study should give expression to self-direction, project and problem-based learning and the appropriate assessment (capstone seminars, portfolios, etc). Articulation routes to PG Dip and Hons should be clarified.
- 4) The **Honours/ PG Dip year** is where specialization should be expanded and articulation routes to the Masters and PhD clarified.

Discussion points

- What does our formal qualification offering look like at present?
 - Are we satisfied with the weighting of undergraduate vs postgraduate qualifications?
 - Are we satisfied with the weighting of professional vs general formative vs academic/ research qualifications?
- To what extent do we want to grow our distance offering, and why?
- Are we certain that the first year experience is of such quality and nature that we are successfully preparing our first years for further study?
 - Are we satisfied with our articulation pathways?
 - Is our PQM sustainable, responsive and coherent?

The NWU PQM as situated on the Higher Education Qualifications Framework



What is noticeable about the NWU PQM?

- 1) Seemingly, most of our PQM is comprised of qualifications and specialisations at postgraduate level: $\pm 75\%$
- 2) Only $\pm 25\%$ of the PQM focuses on the undergraduate level.
- 3) But we know that specialization proliferation at undergraduate level is a feature of our PQM. This means that there are many elective and specialization options within the $\pm 25\%$.
- 4) Proliferation at undergraduate level leads to “over-teaching”. This is borne out by data on staffing in which we see relatively small professoriates, with “juniorisation” at the level of junior and senior lecturer positions.
- 5) Critical cross-field outcomes are not sufficiently evident either in Year 1 or in Years 3/4 of the undergraduate degrees if we consider forms of assessment or forms of development.

Concluding remarks

1. As fundamental component of our TL Strategy, the scope and form of our PQM needs careful deliberation.
2. Our TL Strategy should offer answers to pertinent questions.
(e.g. within the unique NWU context, what does it mean to teach, and to learn, in the 21st century? How do we define knowledge and how should this definition affect the way we teach? How do we ensure that teaching and learning focus on the values, attitudes and behaviors which enable individuals to live and work together in a world characterized by diversity and pluralism.)
3. The professionalisation of university teaching is key to ensure that lecturers know and understand how to use the skill of innovative teaching and appropriate ICT to facilitate not only the learning of knowledge, but more importantly how to use knowledge to solve complex problems within multiple contexts.
4. The student experience (inclusive of development and support opportunities) across the student life cycle is fundamental to student retention and success. We need to distinguish the salient factors for student retention and success of the first year vs the final year experience.
5. An integrated quality assurance system must be evident when reading the TL Strategy