



PAST ... PRESENT ... FUTURE

# Steps of Faith

## At the Evangelical Seminary of Southern Africa

October 2017

IN THIS ISSUE

I strongly believe that academics should also be involved in real-life ministry. Not just to oppose the ivory tower accusations but to remain relevant to actual challenges of ministry. Among other things I have been involved in youth ministry in a local church over the past years. One of the youngsters would every so often challenge me, asking: "What's the point?" This challenge could be levelled against Christianity, church, obeying parents, doing homework, going to bed early (or at all) and a number of other things. At times the question was annoying – mostly when an obvious and natural answer didn't come in time. But the question is also a valid one.

point?" as we consider the ongoing existence of the Seminary?

As we consider the "past – present – and future" of the Seminary the question of the whole point of our existence leaves me uneasy. Naturally we exist to glorify God, even as an institution. Next we exist to "train dedicated Christian leaders, in an urban setting, for the Church-in-Mission by providing quality tertiary education that is Evangelical, Holistic and Contextual." But how much of this have we actually done in the past six years since we lost accreditation?

Should we have done more by just offering training without accreditation? Should we continue to pursue accreditation – possibly for six more years?

Should we simply wait for the Lord to reveal his will and continue as usual until then? But in each of the above scenarios the question "What's the point?" is valid. Depending on the answer to that question the future of the Seminary may take on a number of completely different shapes.

For the moment we are patiently waiting just a bit longer. After all we are so close (see p. 2 for the latest update). But then again ... we were just as close two years ago (Sep 2015). So again: What's the point?

Will future generations of properly trained and equipped students be worth the wait? Will all our efforts and invested time and emotions be rewarded with success? Will God be glorified as the ESSA story unfolds further? At least this last one we are confident of, because that IS the whole point, after all.

Please bear with us as we patiently wait for HIS guidance.

On behalf of the Seminary,  
Johannes Klapprodt, Academic Dean

### [APM - Academic Preparation Modules](#)

South African Higher Education has been facing the challenge of a "gap" for a number of years now. ESSA is hoping to do something about it. Read more on [p. 2](#)

### [CHE Update](#)

The waiting game continues. At least it will have done for most of 2017. Is it finally over? More details on [p. 3](#)



### [Get to know the staff: Roxane](#)

In the last edition we re-introduced Hennie Storm. This edition will feature Roxane Hill – who re-joined us in 2014. Without her the immense library project could not have been done. Read more on [p. 3](#)

## What's the point? – of ESSA?

I also believe that just about all traditions need to be questioned at regular intervals. Not with the intention of getting rid of them but to reach a better understanding of why we do things this way or that way, and what the whole point is anyway. Only once we have asked these questions will we be able to keep the content and adapt the methods. This can apply to preaching, parenting, or even posting on Facebook.

Sadly this question will need to be asked in the context of a theological education institution as well: "What's the point?"

Of course there are the usual mission statements and declarations of purpose and they all sound valid and much thought has gone into formulating them. And yet ... do they really inform and shape everything the institution does? Are finances spent according to what has been declared as the institution's purpose? Are all decisions taken with those aims in mind? Or does the goal simply become survival or existing in a way that ignores the statement and just "is"? Would it be "heretical" to ask "What's the



# APM - Academic Preparation Modules

For a number of years now the higher education sector has been struggling with a serious challenge: School leavers (even with Matric Exemption) do not have what is needed for the first year of tertiary studies. This is, of course, an over-generalized statement and yet it describes the reality in many universities and private institutions.

The problem doesn't seem to be specialized knowledge or higher order skills but simple reading, writing and comprehension skills as well as other fairly basic competencies. The problem is termed an "articulation gap" rather than underpreparedness of students although the later term is acknowledged as key factor.

This proposal was submitted in 2013 and has been going nowhere slowly since then. The underlying problem however remains and the latest protests for free education and "Fees must fall" has added pressure to the problem while at the same time distracting from possible solutions.

ESSA is aware of the challenge, even though we are not (yet) directly affected by it. ESSA has traditionally not appealed to young school leavers but has aimed for mature students. The proposed block release mode further is intended for those who are already involved in ministry and who are more mature.

At the moment ESSA is planning four of these modules which can be taken at various times or stages. Prospective students of ESSA's BTh programme will be strongly encouraged to participate in the APM's and participation will be considered within the application process.

The APM's themselves will focus on four key areas:

## 1.) Academic Literacy

This Module will be structured around the areas of reading, writing, questioning and thinking. The concepts of *sources, opinions, alternative (?) facts, narratives, reports* and other types of literary elements will be considered. Basic differences in writing, writing styles and writing skills will be compared. We will attempt to develop critical minds and investigate concepts of thought and thinking.

## 2.) Electronic Communication

This APM will focus on areas such as emails and best practices regarding electronic communication, as well as web-searches, internet security, social media and reliability, credibility and other aspects of online existence.

## 3.) Spiritual Ministry

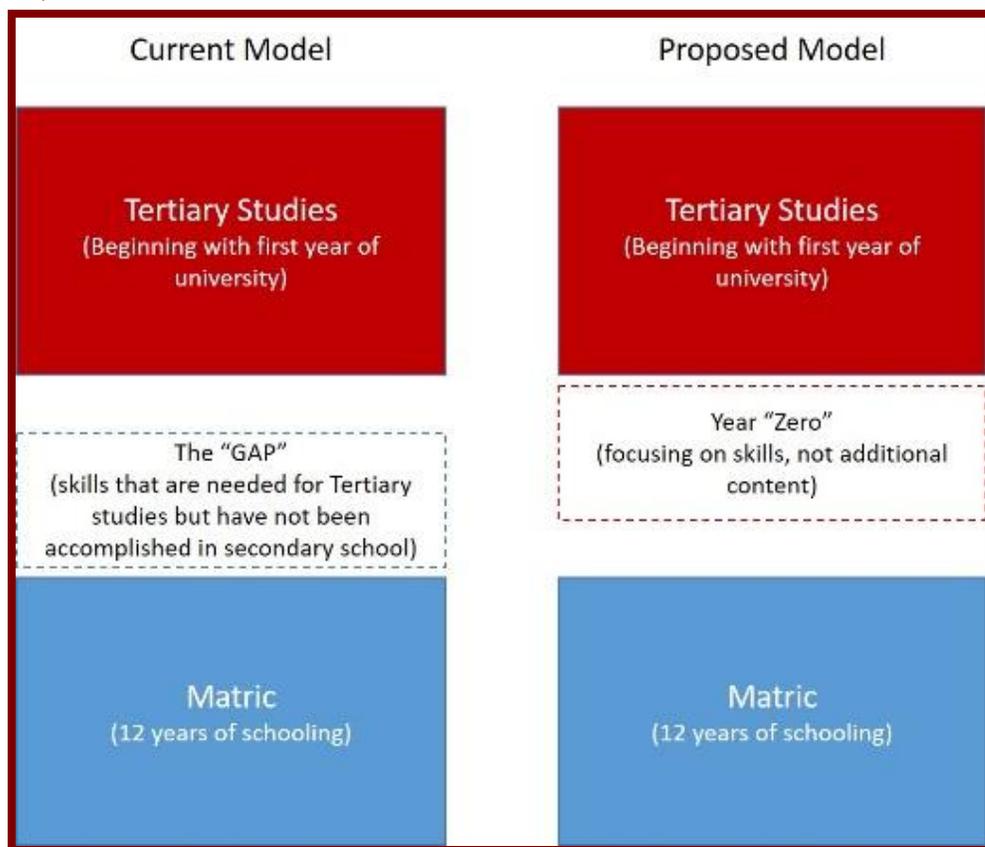
This APM will focus on areas such as spiritual disciplines, integrity of character, fellowship & discipleship, accountability and other aspects of spiritual ministry.

## 4.) Time Management & personal Disciplines

This APM will focus on areas such as the role & understanding of a minister, the rights & obligations of a servant of Christ, and elective topics raised by students.

The APM's carry no credits and will be free of charge in order to not be confused with the actual BTh programme. It may serve as a bridging programme or entry exam in cases where these would be considered but are not part of our policies. It is suggested to make these APM's compulsory for all students except where proof exists that students will not need to participate. The APM's should also be made available to students who have been accepted and who wish or need a refresher in these areas.

APM's can be offered even before ESSA has received official registration. We are currently considering whether this is a wise offering or if we need to review the content, mode or duration. Nothing is decided as yet and we ask you to please pray with us for wisdom in this area.



The solution proposed by CHE is to add a year to the regular duration of programmes, i.e. a three-year Bachelor's degree would require four years of studies. However the first year ("year zero") would NOT add content to the BTh curriculum but would rather enable the student to catch up on the skills that are required for the three years of the regular BTh. (see above image) (*"A proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa", CHE Discussion Document, August 2013*)

Whether school leavers never had these skills or whether high school is so far in the past that these skills may have been forgotten, the challenge exists and ESSA is aiming to assist in overcoming it through APM modules.

These Academic Preparation Modules will not be beneficial only to prospective students of ESSA alone but also to any student who may be considering academic studies or even just a more competent interaction with printed materials and other methods of learning and interaction.

## CHE Update

Just in terms of an overview: ESSA submitted the "application for accreditation of the Bachelor of Theology programme" in May 2014. We have had several steps of communication in between but the major steps were the following:

- 2014, May - Application submitted to CHE
- 2014, Oct – Deferral by CHE (request for additional information)
- 2014, Nov – Info was submitted by ESSA
- 2015, Sep – recommended for accreditation with 3 conditions
- 2016, April – site visit happens
- 2016, Oct – CHE recommends against accreditation, calls for Improvement plan
- 2017, Feb – ESSA submits Improvement plan

CHE has informed us that we had been placed on the Accreditation Committee (AC) meeting for 10/11 May. We were later informed that the meeting ran out of time and that ESSA's application would be carried over to the next meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for the end of July. Several attempts to get confirmation that we had been tabled at that meeting were unsuccessful.

Finally we were informed that ESSA's application was placed on the agenda for the October 4/5 Accreditation meeting. No explanation was given of why the July meeting was missed.

Later that week we were given confirmation that ESSA's application was discussed at length and that a recommendation was issued for the upcoming Higher Education Qualifications Committee (HEQC) meeting on 9 November.

ESSA has been at this stage twice already. In September 2015 the HEQC recommended in favour of accreditation, pending three conditions which were all met. In September 2016 ESSA was at the same stage again (although CHE forgot to inform us and we only received the outcome mid-October). This time the HEQC recommended against accreditation and requested an Improvement plan before considering the matter again.

The Improvement plan was submitted in February and we are once again waiting ever since.



## Get to know the staff: Roxane



I was born and raised in Cape Town. After completing matric I enrolled at the Evangelical Bible College and graduated in 2003 with my Bachelor in Theology. During my years at college I worked in the library as part of my work scholarship. When the librarian went back to the States I oversaw the running of the library and continued working there until we left in 2008. At Bible College I also met Keenan, and we married in 2004. While there, we had our first child, Mia (11yrs); the boys were born in Pietermaritzburg, Mark (7yrs) and Nathan (4yrs).

In 2008, we moved to Pietermaritzburg to pastor the Woodlands Evangelical Bible Church. That is also the same year that I first started working at ESSA as assistant librarian. Due to the financial situation at ESSA, I left in 2010 and worked in a book printing factory until 2014, when I joined ESSA in May of that year. My main task was to undertake a major library project where each title of the vast library collection had to manually be entered into the new database. The old server had crashed repeatedly and there was no other way of securing the data.

I have enjoyed the task, despite the dust that books collect from not being used, but it has been a great joy to get the library 'back on track' for our borrowers, especially with the new features such as on-line searches being possible, etc..

My prayer for ESSA is that it will be used for training and equipping men and women for the ministry. Continue to pray in this regard, and please come and spend some time reading or preparing for your ministry or your studies in our library.

Roxane Hill

As staff we are extremely grateful to have Roxane and her family join us and re-build the library into a proper resource pool for ministry once again.

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