

Corporate Services

The HSRC's Corporate Services supports the multifaceted research activities of the organisation. Its facilities include documentation and information (library) services, as well as information technology services. Human Resources Development, which deals with staff matters, and PRODDER also fall under Corporate Services. (The latter is dealt with in a separate section of the report.)

Documentation and Information Centre

A major responsibility of this centre is the maintenance of several bibliographic databases and a collection of approximately 55 000 books covering all disciplines in the human sciences. The Centre subscribes to 734 international and local scientific journals, and also captures references on all the published outputs of the HSRC.

During the year under review the Centre continued to become more of an electronic-driven rather than a print-based facility. Documents and other sources of information are increasingly stored in digital or other formats and can be accessed remotely, and searched, manipulated and delivered electronically as needed.

Users are provided with a complete mix of print-based and electronic information resources. Information consultants use the 565 gateways to national and international information databases to undertake literature searches and provide reading lists according to specific requirements.

A highlight in 2000/01 was the development of a virtual library page on the intranet that will give researchers easy access to a wide variety of electronic information.

Information Technology Services (ITS)

There are four units operating under this directorate.

The Unit for Task-Related Support and Training provides computer training and support to HSRC researchers in the effective use of IT infrastructure and statistical software. In addition to the day-to-day support, courses were developed and offered during 2000/01 to assist researchers with project planning, knowledge management, statistics, data collection, and data analysis.





The Unit for Statistics, Processing, Archiving, Research and Data Capturing assisted HSRC researchers in processing and manipulating research data and in conducting statistical analyses in a number of large projects dealing with quality learning, the local government election, alcohol and drugs, and public opinion surveys. Although the Unit primarily supports HSRC researchers, external clients include government departments, tertiary institutions, schools and psychologists.

The Unit for Network Infrastructure and Support is responsible for the installation, upgrading and maintenance of the HSRC's IT infrastructure and operating systems. In the past year a team of specialists continued to provide customised IT infrastructure, data security and backup support to HSRC researchers, as well as to clients such as the Centre for Higher Education and Transformation.

Most HSRC systems are "website enabled" due to the growing use of web browsers and corporate portals. The Unit for Systems Development develops and customises these systems mainly for HSRC users.

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A new system was developed in 2000/01 to track all the courses and seminars attended by HSRC staff. This facility will improve the provision of information to the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Department of Education. The Unit also maintained an administrative system for the Register of Graduates until it was transferred to SAQA early in 2001, and for the allocation of social sciences bursaries at the National Research Foundation.

Human Resources Development (HRD)

The principal objectives of this directorate are to contribute to the HSRC's human resources strategic planning and to ensure that best-practice human resources systems, policies, procedures and work processes are developed and introduced.

In 2000/01 HRD assisted with organisational transformation and staff welfare and development. In terms of the Skills Development Levies Act of 1998 and the Skills Development Act of 1999, a skills development facilitator was appointed and a workplace skills plan submitted to the Sector and Training Authority (SETA). Grants for staff training and development were consequently paid to the HSRC. A comprehensive skills audit will be conducted and a revised skills plan drawn up for submission to the SETA once the HSRC's restructuring process is complete.

In accordance with the Employment Equity Act of 1998, an employment equity report and a three-year plan were submitted to the Department of Labour outlining issues of equity and training at the HSRC. The plan will be realigned to the organisation's new vision and priorities in the coming financial year.



An Employee Assistance Programme, incorporating a social plan, was developed as a joint venture between management, the staff union and non-union representatives. Its aim is to assist staff in handling personal and work-related problems so that productivity does not suffer and employees thrive.

HRD also played a facilitating and co-ordinating role in the performance appraisal system and the bursary scheme (both re-instituted after a two-year moratorium), staff promotions and salary negotiations.

In the next financial year HRD intends streamlining human resources policies and procedures to make them user-friendly. It will also be involved in the revision of conditions of service, the development of a performance management system, a new performance-linked salary structure, a job evaluation and grading system, and a reward policy conducive to sound employer/employee relations.

ENQUIRIES

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