

Best practices for administering dual degrees in higher education: Bridging regulatory gaps and ensuring equitable student outcomes

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Session Objectives

- **Introduction**
- **Challenges in Administration and Regulations**
- **Best Practices for Bridging Regulatory Gaps**
- **Ensuring Equitable Student Outcomes**
- **Discussion Questions**



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Introduction

Dual degree programmes, where a single academic department's curriculum is overseen by two faculties, provide students with valuable interdisciplinary opportunities but present notable administrative challenges. At the University of Pretoria, the Informatics Department manages undergraduate and honours programmes, including BCom Informatics (EMS) and BIT Information Systems (EBIT), along with their respective honours degrees. Although these programmes are housed within the Informatics Department, they are governed by differing faculty regulations, creating complexities for Heads of Department (HODs), administrators, and students.



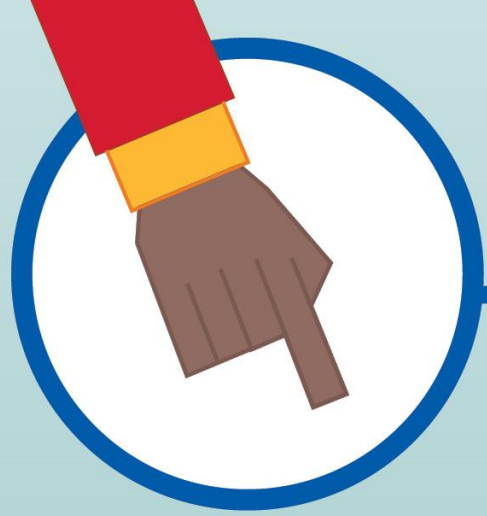
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**Department
of Infomatics**

EBIT

EMS

BIT Information Systems

Hons

MIT

PhD

BCom Informatics

Hons

PGDip

MCom



Informatics at a glance

Informatics is a unique qualification that considers Information and Communication Technology (ICT) within a business environment.

Informatics graduates are able to apply their ICT knowledge in a variety of ICT-related career opportunities with a sound foundation of management services.

BIT Information

BCom Informatics

Internationally accredited
three-year degree



Computing
Accreditation
Commission



Challenges in Administration and Regulations

Conflicting Faculty Regulations

- EMS and EBIT enforce different rules for special exams, progression, and credit recognition.
- Example: BCom Informatics requires 60% in Statistics to progress; BIT Information Systems needs only 50%.
- Impact: BCom students struggling with Statistics may switch to BIT, increasing administrative workload, altering programme demographics, and raising concerns about academic rigour and fairness.



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Challenges in Administration and Regulations

Inconsistent Examination Policies

- **General Academic Regulations and Student Rules 2025:** “Supplementary exams are generally not allowed at honours level. Where faculties permit, specific regulations apply.”
- **EMS Faculty:** Allows BCom Hons Informatics students supplementary exams to pass failed modules, at the department’s discretion.
- **EBIT Faculty:** Prohibits BITHons Information Systems students from supplementary exams, enforcing stricter rules.
- **Impact:** Student frustration and increased workload for HODs and Administrators managing complaints, appeals, and differing faculty regulations.



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Challenges in Administration and Regulations

Administrative Overlap and Miscommunication

- Informatics Department coordinates with both faculties, navigating unclear communication channels.
- Example: HEQSF qualification renaming updates appeared only in EMS brochures, leaving EBIT and the department uninformed.
- Impact: Delayed programme alignment, student and advisor confusion, and risks of non-compliance with national standards.



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Best Practices for Bridging Regulatory Gaps

Unified Framework

- Develop a cross-faculty policy document for dual degrees in the university.
- Standardise rules for progression, special examinations, and honours eligibility.
- Example: Set a common pass mark (e.g., 50%) for shared modules to reduce conflicts.



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Best Practices for Bridging Regulatory Gaps

Transparent Student Communication

- Provide clear, accessible programme information via orientation sessions, online portals, and guides.
- Clarify requirements, progression criteria, and examination policies.
- Example: Explain Statistics pass mark differences to prevent uninformed BCom-to-BIT transfers.



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Best Practices for Bridging Regulatory Gaps

Equitable Academic Support

- Offer tailored support, e.g., bridging courses or tutoring for Statistics, to help BCom students achieve the 60% threshold.
- Provide similar support for honours students to address disparities in supplementary exam access.
- Ensure all students have equal opportunities to succeed.



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Ensuring Equitable Student Outcomes

Standardised Academic Benchmarks

- Advocate for uniform progression criteria (e.g., aligning Statistics pass mark at 55% for both programmes).
- Eliminates incentives for programme switching.
- Requires negotiation with both faculties to promote fairness.



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Ensuring Equitable Student Outcomes

Bias-Free Decision-Making

- Regularly audit administrative decisions (e.g., special exam approvals).
- Detect and correct biases, such as favouring one faculty's students.
- Leverage data from the shared administrative system for analysis.



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Ensuring Equitable Student Outcomes

Student Feedback Mechanisms

- Implement an annual survey for students.
- Capture experiences of inequity or confusion.
- Use feedback to inform policy adjustments.
- Ensure student voices drive programme improvements.



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Discussion Questions

1. What specific regulatory conflicts have you encountered when administering dual-degree programmes, and how were they resolved?
2. How do you balance department-faculty workload?
3. How can small institutions with limited resources adopt to these practices?



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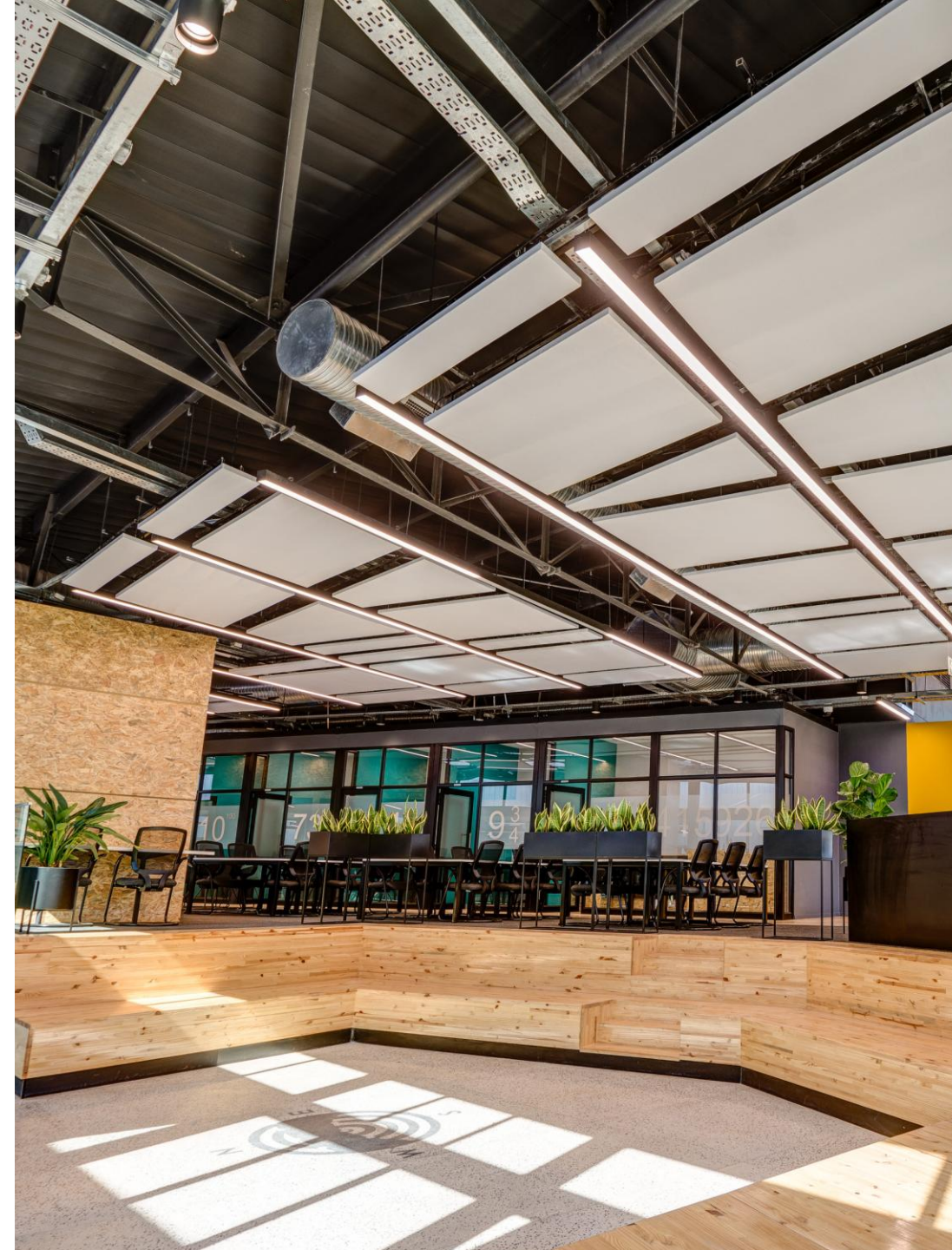
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