

21 May 2014

To Whom It May Concern

REFERENCE FOR Dr. A. DU PLESSIS NMMU DISTINGUISHED TEACHER OF THE YEAR 2014

It gives me great please to provide a collegial testimonial for Dr. Andre Du Plessis for the NMMU Distinguished Teacher of the Year 2014. I have known Dr. Du Plessis for the last three years after my return to South Africa and subsequent employment at NMMU in Port Elizabeth. Being away from South Africa for the last twenty years had left a significant gap in my network of individuals with whom I could share common professional interests. Dr. Du Plessis is amongst those who provided me with a sense of belonging, space and niche in terms of my own work as a lecturer and researcher at NMMU.

My first encounter with Dr. Du Plessis related to his expertise and interest in technology. He not only uses technology and blended learning in his own classroom but also avails himself as a resource to colleagues. I have always found solace in seeking his assistance when required as he willingly gives of his time and expertise in ways that is beneficial to all. He is well respected in the faculty for his expertise in this area. Last year I was fortunate to work with Dr. Du Plessis in the Faculty of Education curriculum renewal team, the Abakhwezeli and as a lecturer in the PGCE programme in which he serves as Head of Programme. In both these communities, I have experienced Dr. Du Plessis as more than just a colleague. His active interest in student experiences, the quality of delivery in the programme and his openness to new ideas and innovation has been truly remarkable. For example, in delivering the PGED 202 module to the PGCE group in both a revised mode and format, Dr. Du Plessis provided his full support and was keen to explore with me an innovation that was radically different in terms of student experience. It required students to move out of their comfort zones. Dr. Du Plessis was at all times available to allay fears and to assist with novel solutions because he was able to trust in the process.

Based on his experiences with the PGCE student camp in 2013 and the feedback from students during curriculum renewal, Dr. Du Plessis radically changed the focus and delivery on the PGCE orientation camp on which I served as a critical friend. He developed core foci for the camp which included creating community, introducing students to the concept of a humanising pedagogy and including some core aspects of teaching and learning that stimulated these students into self-reflective and reflexive practices. Dr. Du Plessis has been innovative in his teaching and he is very well respected amongst peers and students alike. His leadership of the PGCE curriculum renewal and the programme in general [including a new cohort on the George campus] has created a core faculty team that owns and creatively engages with ways of re-visioning and re-imagining that programme. This work has also stimulated scholarship. For example, Dr Du Plessis and I are on a team of faculty writing an article based on enacting reflexivity that is based on our curriculum renewal work in the faculty.

It therefore is a privilege to recommend Dr. Du Plessis for this award. He is an asset to the faculty and to the students we serve. If there are any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me at any-time. My contact details are as follows: email: kathija.adam@nmmu.ac.za or 041 5044041/1385.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Kathija Adam
Director of School for Continuing Professional Development