



**higher education
& training**

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Development Framework for New
Universities in the Northern Cape and
Mpumalanga Provinces**

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1. Purpose of this Document

This document sets out government's evolving vision and thinking on the development of the two new universities in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga. The document provides a framework within which the diverse elements and activities required for establishing the new universities may be conceptualized, planned, structured, prioritized, integrated and ordered.

The document reflects the intent of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and creates a framework for engagement and discussion.

2. Context

Government has adopted a range of strategies to expand the country's post school education system, increasing the opportunities available to a growing number of qualifying school leavers. Since the transition to democracy, much has been done to increase the capacity and efficiency of existing institutions.

Since 2006 Government has invested more than R6.8b in the upgrading and expansion of infrastructure across South Africa's 23 existing universities. This year the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is allocating a further R3.8b for infrastructure expansion during 2012 and 2013. While enrolments have grown from 603 000 in 2001 to 900 000 in 2011, capacity remains inadequate to accommodate the rising number of qualifying school leavers.

Against this background Government has decided to develop two new universities in the provinces of Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape, the only two provinces that do not yet have a University. Government recognises that this as an important step in the long term expansion of our entire post school system of education and training.

3. Background and progress

In 2010 the Minister of Higher Education and Training appointed two task teams to investigate the feasibility and possible models for the establishment of universities in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape respectively. The task teams engaged stakeholders in the provinces, and, taking into account provincial and national needs, made recommendations on the type and size of the two new institutions, including information on possible sites for the institutions.

Consultations held with representatives of provincial and local government, members of industry and community interest groups confirmed that there was wide-ranging support for the establishment of the new universities in both the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga

Provinces. The groups consulted included various provincial and local government departments, representatives of major development initiatives in the provinces, academic institutions, industry players, business and labour organisations and political parties, formations and forums. Engagement with these stakeholders included face-to-face interviews, written submissions, interest groups workshops, and in the case of the Northern Cape Province, a provincial stakeholder summit.

The reports of the task team were submitted to the Minister in September 2011, and subsequently to the Council on Higher Education for their advice, as is required by the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No.101 of 1997).

Since November 2011, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has appointed a project management team to take forward the planning process under the guidance of a project steering committee, which includes academics from existing universities as well as representatives of the Premiers and of the National Institutes of Higher Education in the two Provinces. Academic work groups are being set up to flesh out their potential academic direction.

The project management team has visited and assessed 18 sites put forward by a range of stakeholders in the two provinces. Its recommendations on the main seats of the new universities are set out in a separate document together with the selection criteria. After consultation within national and provincial government, these recommendations have been approved by the Minister, namely that the main campuses and seats of learning should be located:

- in the inner city of Kimberley in the Northern Cape;
- on the site of the Lowveld Agricultural College, Nelspruit in Mpumalanga.

The next stage is a detailed investigation of the recommended sites. This will include further stakeholder engagement and discussions with potentially affected parties, mainly other institutions of higher education active in the provinces.

4. Government's unfolding vision

As South Africa's first new institutions of higher learning since 1994, the planned universities are envisaged as symbols of our new order, of democracy, inclusiveness, growth and opportunity. These institutions must become an enduring source of pride, both nationally and provincially. They must be able to attract the best academics in South Africa, the continent and the world. The hallmark of these new universities must be academic excellence underpinned by quality leadership.

These new universities should take their place amongst the network of institutions serving and expanding our national needs. They will provide qualifications in a range of

fields for young people wishing to develop high level skills for the economy and personal advancement. They must create a strong academic hub, drawing on the individuality of each province to develop a unique academic focus and strong main campuses that enable multi campus expansion over time. They must enable maximum access within the country and contribute to the economic and cultural development of their respective provinces.

It is envisaged that both institutions will be comprehensive universities, each aspiring to be destinations of choice for qualifying school leavers across South Africa and the continent. The new universities will support both national and provincial goals. They will be unencumbered by the history of advantage and disadvantage attached to institutions of higher learning established during the previous political dispensation.

When established, government envisions these new universities:

- as *sites of learning and culture* which give expression to democracy and social justice and increase participation in political, social, cultural and economic life;
- as *active participants* taking centre stage in addressing the challenges confronting society and playing their role in the context of a *Developmental State*;
- as *African universities*, part of a broader network and community of African institutions of higher learning with a long tradition of scholarship, rooted in the African experience, contributing to African knowledge production and generating ideas and insights with global relevance;
- as *21st century social institutions* that must develop innovative modalities of governance, funding, teaching and learning, research and civic engagement in order to respond to ever-changing social, cultural, political, environmental and economic demands;
- as *relevant leaders of the knowledge economy*, actively engaging communities to produce knowledge for social development and delivering innovation-driven research for commercial and economic advancement.

5. Principles

While each institution will develop its own identity and uniqueness, there are a number of principles that should guide their unfolding development.

5.1. Expansion of national academic capacity

The establishment of the two new universities is an extension of current initiatives to expand the capacity of higher education institutions and to increase access considerably over the next 20 – 25 years. The National Plan on Higher Education and the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training envisage an increase in enrolment for higher

education to 20% by 2016 and 23% by 2030 respectively.

Against this background it is important that the new universities do not simply take over existing academic programmes run by other institutions, but add to the array of available offerings.

5.2. Comprehensive Universities designed for growth and flexibility

Both institutions should develop into fully fledged Comprehensive Universities offering a range of formative and technology-focused undergraduate programmes catering to youth with diploma and bachelor entry NCS qualifications and NCV qualifications, and strong post-graduate programmes in niche areas.

Over time both institutions may develop as multi-campus institutions starting with the main campus (seat of learning) designed for an initial student population of 15 000 in Mpumalanga and 5 000 in the Northern Cape. Future expansion should include the potential for additional campuses where appropriate benefit can be realised.

It is important that the main campus and seat of each university should be based on a **contact mode of learning**, providing a rounded student experience. However, given the potential of evolving communication technology, future expansion could be through a variety of modes, including diverse combinations of contact, open and distance learning.

While preliminary academic and physical planning requires certain assumptions to be made in relation to the Programme Qualification Mix, it is believed that the approach to the academic design of each institution should be based on a progressive elaboration, and not be rigidly fixed at the start.

The establishment of the new universities should contribute to the emergent system of articulation pathways by defining qualification articulation routes clearly and drawing in students who do not necessarily come along traditional routes. The universities need to work closely with other post-school institutions, and especially the Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, to ensure the mobility of students into graduate and post-graduate programmes. Indeed, the new universities will need to establish a range of close working relationships with the FET colleges in order to build the capacity of the latter and to improve quality and efficiency of our education and skills development system as a whole.

5.3. Equity, Access and Success

The establishment of the new universities is another step towards redressing inequities by providing additional access to higher education to students who continue to suffer structural, racial and economic discrimination. Measures to achieve this must include

initiatives to establish a student and academic profile that reflects the demographic make-up of South Africa.

Within both provinces, and more so in the Northern Cape, access is constrained by distance and the lack of affordable accommodation in proximity to the new universities. This is particularly true for historically disadvantaged school leavers. At the same time, experience at existing universities has demonstrated that students in residence have a greater success rate.

For these reasons a high proportion of students will need to be accommodated in residence. On-campus residence provision should be made in Mpumalanga for up to 60% and in Kimberley for up to 80% of the planned student enrolment.

5.4. Quality and Academic Excellence

Planning must enable both institutions to **become institutions of choice**. This will require a leadership commitment to excellence in teaching and research, with unique programmes and research priorities that will attract students, academics and researchers from across the country, the Diaspora and internationally.

This implies **academic missions** that will develop towards specialist niche areas not available in other SA institutions, and an environment that will attract and retain high level staff, as well as inspire a vibrant student population.

Excellence in undergraduate (and post graduate) teaching will need to be enabled from the top end, namely research and post graduate offerings linked to at least one specific niche area where high level human resources are available, or attracted, for the purpose. This top end specialisation must support the development of undergraduate programmes leading to these postgraduate specialisations.

Commitment to excellence will need to be **supported by partnerships with other institutions** to build the capacity and capability of staff and quality programmes.

High quality leadership and management will be a top priority for the universities, given the important role leaders and managers play in achieving planned outcomes, managing the strategies of the institutions and building institutional capacity.

5.5. Supporting Infrastructure, Facilities and Services

Student life must be understood as integral to university life and therefore be factored into the academic and social fabric of the institution from the beginning, including cultural, artistic and sporting activities.

The design of the infrastructure and facilities should reflect the iconic nature of the universities and our ambitions for their establishment. The setting should give each university a presence that accentuates its stature. However, each university should be a “*space of its place*”, with an identity that draws on the characteristics of the site on which it is constructed and pathways and portals for interaction with the community at large.

The campuses will need to provide quality learning and living environments for students who will benefit from advanced communications platforms and processes delivered by the latest information and communication technologies. Each new university will require access to contemporary facilities, instructional technologies, well-equipped libraries, knowledge resources and laboratories and must establish the research and scientific infrastructure to support its niche areas of specialisation.

Both universities will have a large proportion of their student populations in on-campus residences. The accommodation will need to be within walking distance of the main academic and social spaces to facilitate the integration of the academic community with the communities surrounding the universities. Academic, cultural and social spaces should promote formal and informal gathering, meeting and sharing within the diversity of the academic communities.

5.6. Place-relevant and Engaged

The new universities should be integrated into their social, cultural, economic and built environments and contribute to social and economic development and renewal as fully fledged members of their communities. The policies, structures and priorities of the universities must reflect their commitment to engagement with the surrounding communities and their curricula should give expression to their proactive pursuit of opportunities for such engagement as a means to enrich the student experience.

5.7. Sustainability

Decisions taken in relation to the location, design and management of the institutions must be geared towards optimal sustainability of the new institutions. Sustainability should be understood to embrace all aspects of the new universities, including their academic, institutional, managerial, technical, financial, and environmental dimensions.

It is important to recognize that it may take up to a decade before the new universities are cost effective and sustainable.

6. Challenges

The aspirations and principles outlined above highlight a range of challenges.

The development of the universities will require significant capital investment and operational expenditure that will need to be supported over a period of time before the new universities are self-sustaining and established as fully fledged universities.

The new institutions will have to contend in a very competitive environment to attract high level academics and build up the necessary human resource capacity characteristic of centres of excellence. Inevitably the new universities will make the shortage of academics more acute in the short run. However, in the longer term, they will contribute to our capacity to realise our emerging plans for the recruitment, development and retention of academics and other skilled personnel for the university system.

The design of the academic content will have to meet the demands of South Africa's development priorities while achieving the highest academic standards in carving out a niche for the institutions. The offering of the academic programmes needs to be of the highest quality.

Government will need to work in partnership with a range of private and public institutions so that it is able to address these and other challenges on the road ahead.

7. Academic prospects in the two provinces

The seat for the main campus of the university in the Northern Cape Province will be in the inner city of Kimberley, while the seat for the main campus in Mpumalanga will be on the site of the Lowveld Agricultural College, overlooking the City of Nelspruit and close to the new Provincial Legislature. They will both be developed as strong main campuses and academic hubs of multi-campus expansion over time.

Each university will develop a unique academic focus based on the individuality of its host province and national priorities. The Programme Qualification Mix for the institutions will be developed as part of the detailed planning activities currently underway. The potential academic focuses for the two universities are described below.

7.1. Northern Cape

The Northern Cape is the largest province (approximately 30% of the country) with the smallest population (less than 2%) in South Africa. The vision for the province is to build a prosperous, sustainable and growing provincial economy to reduce poverty and improve social development.

The province has comparative advantages in mining, agriculture, community services, transport and communication relative to the rest of South Africa. The Northern Cape

Provincial Growth and Development Strategy has identified a number of prospects for growth in agriculture, agro-processing, mining and mineral processing, tourism, energy and science and technology.

The province represents a rich source of information on the development of human settlements in South Africa. The history of human settlement dates back millions of years based on the discovery of early hominid remains.

The province has also been catapulted to the foreground of modern science. It is home to the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT), the largest facility of its type in the southern hemisphere and one of the top 10 facilities in the world. The facility enables astronomers to investigate the earliest galaxies, the birth and death of stars, and the scale and age of the universe.

More recently, South Africa and Australia were jointly awarded the bid to host a R14.5 billion Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio telescope. It will be one of the largest scientific research facilities in the world and positions South Africa to become a major international hub for astronomy and cutting-edge technology. The benefits of the SKA to the Northern Cape include installation of a 10Gbps cable that will give communities better broadband access, expansion of educational resources in the area and access to science and engineering bursaries from undergraduate to post-doctoral level that will promote education and training.

The following fields of study and areas of specialisation have been preliminarily identified as pertinent to the university in the Northern Cape, based on the provincial growth and development strategy, consultations with stakeholders during the feasibility study process, and early discussions with experts:

- Information technology and computer sciences with possible areas of specialisation on systems administration, networking and LAN/WAN or Web management;
- Engineering and applied sciences with a possible focus on manufacturing, diamond technology, renewable or alternative energy;
- Agriculture with a focus on agro processing, agricultural business technology and agriculture mechanisation and food science and technology;
- Management studies with a possible focus on business management / hospitality management / tourism management;
- Health sciences with an initial focus on nursing; and
- Humanities with areas of specialisation in teacher education, indigenous languages, heritage studies and art.

It is envisioned that the university should be a comprehensive institution but should adopt a phased approach to instituting the undergraduate programmes identified above. It

should offer a programme mix of technical, vocational, professional and academic disciplines and qualification types should include Higher Certificates, Advanced Certificates, Diplomas and Bachelor's degrees.

The university in the Northern Cape should develop at least two postgraduate centres of excellence, with consideration being given to:

- Physical sciences – astronomy
- Applied sciences – renewable energy, low carbon energy, hydrology, water resource management and climate variability

7.2. Mpumalanga

The Mpumalanga Province covers 6.3% of the country and is home to 7.2% of the South African population. Its economy makes the fifth largest contribution to the national economy and the province is a substantial role-player in the national mining and utilities, manufacturing, transport and community services sectors. Efforts to create employment are based on infrastructure development, climate change and the green economy, agriculture and agro-processing, rural development, tourism, business services, and, in the public sector, a focus on health, education, combating crime, expansion in public works, a youth development programme and community.

The agricultural sector is the largest user of land, covering approximately 68% of the province. Other primary land use is for mining, industry, forestry, ecotourism, private game farming and nature conservation. Forestry and agriculture have caused increasing degradation of natural vegetation and ecosystems on the Mpumalanga Highveld and the expansion of mining operations is likely to add further pressure and to pose a serious threat to water quality in pristine catchments. The demand for land will increase, requiring greater measures to regulate and balance priorities for economic growth with land requirements for population growth and the preservation of the environment.

Preliminary investigations suggest that the following fields of study and qualification types are pertinent:

- Agriculture with areas of specialisation in natural resource management, nature conservation, plant and animal sciences, forestry and wood sciences and technology as well as wild life management;
- Engineering specialising in industrial and manufacturing, agricultural, chemical and computer systems engineering;
- Health Sciences and related clinical sciences with a strong linkage to the Nursing college and other health professions;
- Computer science focusing on programming, information science and data processing and business system analysis;

- Management, economics and finance fields with areas of specialisation in logistics management, local government; and
- Teacher education with an initial focus on foundation phase teaching.

The university in the Mpumalanga should also develop at least two postgraduate centres of excellence, with consideration being given to:

- Applied science – agricultural sciences, specifically linked to sub-tropical fruit, biodiversity and ecosystem management; and
- Human development, family studies and rural and sustainable development.

8. Way forward

Immediate priorities on the way forward include confirmation of the seats for the new universities, appointment of the Interim Councils for each, the naming of the new universities, technical investigations and the relevant assembly of government-owned land. These activities are geared towards formal promulgation of the new universities and establishment of the first cohort of institutional leadership upon conclusion of the consultation process.

The new universities will be promulgated in terms of Section 20(1) of the Higher Education Act (101 of 1997, as amended). This requires the Minister to indicate the date on which each university will be established, the name and type of each university, as well as the physical location and official address of each university. In the case of the university in Mpumalanga, it is the intention to incorporate the Lowveld Agricultural College as a subdivision of the university, in terms of section 21(1)(b) of the Higher Education Act (101 of 1997 as amended).

Towards this end government will be consulting relevant stakeholders and affected parties.

At the same time work will continue on the development of plans for the establishment and operations of the new universities, including detailed estimates and mobilisation of capital and operating expenditure with the aim to effect the offering of selected academic programmes in the 2014 academic year, and to prepare a platform for proper management and governance of the institutions.

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is acutely aware that responsibility will ultimately rest on the leadership of the new universities to crystallise and champion the definitive vision for each institution. It has therefore endeavoured in this document to set out some indicators that guide and stimulate, rather than limit their potential development.

This discussion document constitutes an invitation for public comment. Feedback from interested parties will inform the way forward. The DHET therefore invites the higher

education sector and all South Africans to contribute to the project of development of the first new universities in democratic South Africa.

The Department also invites suggestions from the public on proposed names for:

1. The new university that will be located in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga; and
2. The new university that will be located in Kimberley, Northern Cape.

It is envisaged that the names proposed for each university would reflect some of the following aspirations and qualities:

- a) South Africa's new order, democracy, inclusiveness, growth and opportunity;
- b) Academic excellence;
- c) Leadership;
- d) Linkage to the province, South Africa and the continent of Africa; and
- e) Individuality of each province.

All proposals and comments should reach the Department not later than the 18th September 2012 at the following address: newuniversities@dhet.gov.za or fax to 012 321 1788. During this period and beyond, the Department of Higher Education and Training will also be engaged in a series of consultations with affected parties.