



new universities news update

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This News Update is compiled by the New Universities Project Management Team established by the Department of Higher Education and Training to manage the planning for the new universities in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape. If you have a query or comment, please send an email to:

newuniversities@dhet.gov.za

Minister Nzimande launches draft Development Framework – 23rd August 2012

Speaking at a media briefing in Cape Town, Minister Blade Nzimande called for public comment on the draft “*Development Framework for New Universities in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape*”. He also called for proposals on the names for each university.

The Development Framework sets out government’s unfolding thinking and creates a framework for discussion. It summarises the background and progress made as well as government’s overarching vision. While recognising that each university should develop its own identity and uniqueness, the document discusses a number of principles that should guide their development. Key challenges are highlighted including the anticipated capital and operational costs and the need to support the new universities until they are self sustaining. Partnerships within government and with industry, the higher education sector and other stakeholders are singled out as key to addressing some of the challenges ahead.

The new institutions will be established in the two provinces which do not yet have a university. It is anticipated that each university will develop a unique academic focus based on the individuality of its host province and on national priorities. In this context, the document discusses the potential academic focus of each university.

“Our most immediate priority is the acquisition of state-owned land, the naming of the new universities and appointment of their interim councils.... Towards this end, the most urgent priority is the commencement of consultations with relevant stakeholders and affected parties”, said Nzimande.

The document can be accessed from the DHET website: www.dhet.gov.za and the project website: www.newuniversities.ac.za

All comments should reach the Department not later than the 18th September 2012

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New Universities in Nelspruit and Kimberley

On the 5th of July President Jacob Zuma announced that the new universities for Mpumalanga and Nelspruit will be located in the capitals of the two Provinces.

“I am pleased to announce that the seat and main campus for the University in Mpumalanga will be at the Lowveld Agricultural College, a site overlooking the City of Nelspruit and close to the new Provincial Parliament.

In the Northern Cape it is our intention to establish the seat and main campus in the inner city of Kimberley, injecting new life and purpose into this historic mining city.”

Explaining some of the core reasons for the selection, President Zuma said the new institutions “must create strong academic hubs, 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.”

The decision by Minister Blade Nzimande, was based on recommendations of the project team and followed consultation with leaders in both national and provincial government. Commenting on the work in progress, Dr Di Parker, DHET Acting Deputy Director-General for University Education, said, “We have taken some important steps in the planning for the new universities. We have appointed a project management team to assist with a range of technical issues. We have also appointed an overarching project steering committee that includes academics from several universities as well as representatives from the National Institute for Higher Education and from the Premier’s Office in each province.”

Dr Parker explained that “The steering committee is providing oversight and guidance to the unfolding thinking on the two institutions. Together we have explored a range of issues pertinent to the selection of the best sites for the new Universities in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape. These include:

- Understanding the nature, scale and possible academic content of the two institutions;
- Developing town and site selection criteria to enable objective decisions to be taken;
- Visiting and assessing the 18 sites put forward by a range of stakeholders in the two provinces.”

The “*Recommendations on the Seats for the New Universities*” can be accessed on the website: www.newuniversities.ac.za. In the month ahead, the Department intends to further investigate the identified sites and at the same time to engage stakeholders around specific aspects of the academic vision and planning. It will also consult potentially affected parties, mainly higher education institutions, particularly those operating in the two provinces.

Noting that these are the first new higher learning institutions to be established in South Africa since the dawn of our democracy in 1994, the President expressed his aspirations.

“Collectively we must ensure that these institutions 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.”

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Minister invites proposals on the names of the new Universities

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.

Addressing the media on the 23rd August, Minister Nzimande invited 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 democracy, inclusiveness, growth and opportunity;
- b) Academic excellence;
- c) Outstanding 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.

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Immediate Goals

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.

The DHET New Universities Project Management Team is responsible for coordinating a series of diverse projects that will deliver a comprehensive Implementation Plan for each of the two new universities. Academic Working Groups are developing proposals on the academic offering of each university, whilst a Spatial and Infrastructure Team is overseeing the physical planning. Another team is busy setting up the institutional and management framework to enable each university to get started.

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Work in Progress: Spatial and Physical Planning

Discussions are underway with the Department of Public Works to confirm key spatial planning aspects, in particular the status of the publicly owned land and the procedures to secure, and ultimately transfer, the land into the ownership of the new universities. Close collaboration will be established with the two local municipalities and this month presentations were made to the respective Mayoral Committees.

During August 2012, tenders have been invited for a range of professional services to ensure that preliminary feasibility studies are carried out. Inter alia these include assessments such

as town planning, civil engineering, geotechnical, environmental, land surveying and others. Tender documents are available on the new universities website, www.newuniversities.ac.za.

In order to encourage local and regional interest, tenders for each of the two universities, have primarily been advertised in locally published newspapers. Arrangements have also been made for relevant tenders to close at the provincially based National Institutes of Higher Education (NIHE) both within close proximity to the respective Local Authority offices. This will support the participation of consulting practices with specific knowledge of the locality.

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Work in Progress: Academic Planning

The new universities constitute a national resource. In this context the academic offerings of the two institutions must deliver *academic excellence* and support each university to become an academic *destination of choice* not only for the citizens of the region but also for prospective students from all parts of South Africa, the SADC countries and internationally.

Academic Working Groups are being established to identify the appropriate Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) for each university to enable phased implementation between 2014 and 2020 as part of an institutional operating plan (IOP). The Working Groups will consist of experienced senior academic staff from established Universities who are willing to assist the new universities to develop their academic offering. The appropriate PQMs for each University must ensure an appropriate balance between degree programmes characteristic of 'traditional' universities and certificates and diplomas characteristic of universities of technology.

It is also regarded as important for each university to develop specialist niche programmes that draw on and promote the resources of the region in which the institution is situated (e.g. tropical agriculture in Mpumalanga). In this context possibilities will be explored for partnership and cooperation with commerce and industry. It is also envisaged that caretaker or "host" universities will be identified to support a group of academic programmes (forming a discipline based 'school').

This planning process will assist with identification of the necessary *human resources and infrastructure requirements* as well as the *academic administrative systems* needed to facilitate the recruitment, selection, admission and registration of students for the immediate future.

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