

# Close out Report

of the New Universities Project Management Team on the

Development of New Universities in  
Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape

01 NOVEMBER 2011 - 31 JULY 2017



UNIVERSITY OF  
MPUMALANGA



SOL PLAATJE  
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WITS  
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higher education  
& training

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# Chapter 2

Context and drivers



## **2. Context and Drivers**

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In the first decade of the new millennium university enrolments grew by more than 300 000, increasing from 603 000 in 2001 to more than 937 000 in 2011. Investment in university infrastructure received a significant boost between 2006/07 and 2009/10 when the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) provided R3.6 billion to universities for infrastructure development, followed by an additional R3.2 billion from 2010/11 to 2011/12, and a further R5.5 billion from 2012/13 to 2014/15.<sup>#</sup> Notwithstanding the increase in funding towards infrastructure investment, these enrolment increases placed already overburdened institutional infrastructure under significant pressure. The envisioned increase in participation rates, from 17,3% in 2011 to 25% by 2030 (that is from just over 937 000 students in 2011 to about 1.6 million enrolments in 2030) set out in the National Development Plan, necessitated an expansion of the current system by, among other strategies, building new universities to accommodate the levels of access required to achieve these goals. <sup>[2-1]</sup>

This section traces the background and key drivers to the establishment of the two new universities. It briefly sets out the key milestones achieved in the project establishment phase, with specific reference to the promulgation of the new universities.

### **2.1. BACKGROUND**

Access to higher education matters. Recent research confirms that graduates in South Africa have the best labour market prospects compared to other education cohorts. <sup>[2-2]</sup> Graduates are more likely to be employed in the formal sector with the unemployment rate among graduates at 5,2% and that of persons with other tertiary qualifications (diplomas or certificates) at 12,6%. † The National Development Plan recognises higher education as “a major driver” of economic development and is critically important for good citizenship that enriches the lives of citizens.\* Accordingly, the plan sets the goal of increasing enrolments to 1.6 million by 2030 from 1.1 million in 2014. <sup>[2-3]</sup> This will require an increase in participation rates in universities from 17% to 25% by 2030 so as to improve access and success, particularly for those groups previously disadvantaged based on race, gender and disability status. <sup>[2-4]</sup>

The National Development Plan notes that the university system is under considerable strain and remains characterised by historical inequities and slow growth in academic staff, creaking university infrastructure, equipment shortages and inadequate student housing. The establishment of the Sol Plaatje University (SPU) and the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) must be seen in the context of the drive to expand the post-school system to meet the aforementioned policy goals. The two universities are expected to extend and enhance the national network of tertiary education institutions and provide sorely needed additional higher education capacity. Establishment of the new universities represents a long-term investment in the expansion of the higher education system and as such requires significant capital and operational expenditure in the short to medium term.

The process for establishing the new universities was initiated when the Minister of Higher Education and Training (DHET) appointed two task teams in 2010 to investigate the

feasibility and possible models for the establishment of universities in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape respectively. Following extensive consultation with stakeholders in the provinces, the task teams submitted their reports to the Minister in September 2011, and subsequently to the Council on Higher Education (CHE) for their advice, as is required by the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No.101 of 1997). The task teams concluded that there is a clear need for the expansion of the higher education and training system, including the need to build more institutions.<sup>[2-4]</sup> The task team investigating the establishment of the university in Mpumalanga concluded that a university medium-term enrolment of at least 15 000 students is viable in the province, whereas the task team for the Northern Cape concluded that it will be a challenge to ensure an adequate number of students to constitute a viable university. The CHE concurred with the analysis of the task team, and concluded that the potential inflow of students from the school system into higher education in the Northern Cape is not sustainable.<sup>[2-5]</sup>

The Minister of Higher Education decided to proceed with both universities in the conviction that universities are essentially national institutions and that a university in the Northern Cape would attract students from across the country and not only from the school system in the Northern Cape. In November 2011, through a Memorandum of Agreement with Wits University, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) appointed a New Universities Project Management Team (NUPMT) to take forward the planning process under the guidance of a project steering committee (PSC). The PSC included academics from existing universities as well as representatives of the Premiers and of the National Institutes of Higher Education (NIHE) in the two provinces. Furthermore academic work groups were established to flesh out the potential academic direction of the new universities. Chapter 4 expands on the modalities of the governance and management arrangements put in place to guide the implementation of the project.

## **2.2. PROJECT ESTABLISHMENT PRIORITIES AND A SHARED VISION**

Immediate priorities for the NUPMT comprised the technical work needed to promulgate the new universities in terms of Section 201(1) of the Higher Education Act (101 of 1997, as amended) stipulating for each institution the *type* of university, its *name* and official *address* and the *members of the university's Interim Council*. In addition the NUPMT needed to develop a comprehensive implementation plan for each university covering academic, institutional and infrastructure development and establishing the technical feasibility of each university.

By March 2013, these priorities had been largely addressed. However a key constraint to the promulgation of the two universities and their further development remained sufficient assurance that the land would be committed and transferred for this purpose by the relevant Public Works Departments. This matter would subsequently be resolved in a unique and innovative manner which is described further on under sections 3.2 and 6.4, enabling promulgation of both universities by August 2013.

Also key to the promulgation was the early development of a vision behind which to align the efforts of all stakeholders. This vision was expected to provide important guidance to the design, development and establishment of the new institutions, whilst at the same time

...serving as a framework for communicating the aspirations of the DHET in this regard. Nine months after the submission of the reports by the task teams, the DHET issued a general notice in the Government Gazette calling for comments on the Development Framework for the new universities in August 2012. [2-6]

The Development Framework set forth government’s unfolding vision for the new institutions (see Box 1) and set out the principles to guide the establishment of each. These principles situated the new institutions as fundamental to the expansion of national academic capacity, making a contribution to equity, access and success through quality and academic excellence. The new universities would have to be place-relevant and engaged, while providing the requisite infrastructure, facilities and services that would make each institution “a space of its place”.

<b>Vision for the New Universities</b>
<p>When established, government envisions these new universities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• as <i>sites of learning and culture</i> which give expression to democracy and social justice and increase participation in political, social, cultural and economic life;</li><li>• as <i>active participants</i> taking centre stage in addressing the challenges confronting society and playing their role in the context of a developmental state;</li><li>• as <i>African universities</i>, 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;</li><li>• as <i>21st century social institutions</i> 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;</li><li>• as <i>relevant leaders of the knowledge economy</i>, actively engaging communities to produce knowledge for social development and delivering innovation-driven research for commercial and economic advancement.</li></ul>

The Development Framework further served as an important means by which government sought to elicit input from stakeholders and consult with stakeholders. The invitation to comment on the Development Framework was sent to 78 individuals at 41 different institutions, in addition to inviting the general public to comment. The DHET had received 22 responses by the end of business on 21 September 2012. Sixty-nine percent of inputs suggested names for the universities and 35% commented on the Development Framework. These submissions were made by respondents from universities (36%), government (23%), and individuals with no institutional affiliations (33%).

Analysis of the stakeholder inputs revealed that more than three-quarters of the submissions provided outright support for the establishment of the new universities; two respondents supported the establishment with suggestions for improving the prospects for success; and one respondent supported the establishment of the universities with some concerns.

Fourteen names were proposed for the university in Mpumalanga and four suggestions were received for the name of the university in the Northern Cape as indicated in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: Proposed Names for the University**

<b>Mpumalanga Province</b>	<b>Northern Cape Province</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. GULA ra vutlharhi</li> <li>2. Sunrise University</li> <li>3. University of Mpumalanga</li> <li>4. The People's University of Mpumalanga</li> <li>5. The Mpumalanga University of Excellence</li> <li>6. New Dawn</li> <li>7. New Horizon</li> <li>8. Mpumalanga University</li> <li>9. Dr EJ Mabuza University of Excellence</li> <li>10. Mbombela University</li> <li>11. Umcebo Welwati University</li> <li>12. Mpumalanga University of Technology</li> <li>13. Inkhululeko University of Mpumalanga</li> <li>14. The University of Mapulaneng</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. University of the Northern Cape</li> <li>2. Robert Sobukwe</li> <li>3. Sol Plaatje</li> <li>4. Solomon Plaatjie University</li> <li>5. The University of Kimberley</li> <li>6. Pixley Ka Tsaka Seme</li> </ol>

The DHET further held a series of meetings and workshops with 16 interested and affected parties focusing primarily on educational institutions, provincial and local government as well as the business community.

### **2.3. INTERIM COUNCILS**

By notice in the Government Gazette No 35956 of 7 December 2012 the Minister invited nominations for people who, by virtue of their knowledge, competencies and experience, could serve as members of the Interim Councils for each university. Parallel to that process the DHET, through the New Universities Project Team, initiated a process to identify appropriate persons to be recommended to the Minister for appointment to serve on the Interim Councils. Fifty nominations were received by the DHET.

Letters inviting the nominees to express their interest and availability to serve on the Interim Councils of the new universities in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape provinces were sent to all 50 nominees. Only 35 complete responses with curriculum vitae were received. A submission was tabled to the Minister for final decision making and appointment of the Interim Councils.

### **2.4. PRESIDENT ANNOUNCES NAMES & INTERIM COUNCILS OF THE NEW UNIVERSITIES**

President Zuma announced the names of the new universities in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces and the appointment of Interim Council Members on 25 July 2013. The name Sol Plaatje University (SPU) was selected for the university in the Northern Cape Province, while the University of Mpumalanga was selected for the university in Mpumalanga Province. Dr Nzimande, Minister of Higher Education and Training, appointed the following members to the Interim Councils:

**Table 2.2: Interim Council Members**

<b>University in the Northern Cape</b>	<b>University in Mpumalanga</b>
Ms Jennifer Glennie (Chairperson)	Dr Madoda Mabunda (Chairperson)
Mr Abel Madonsela	Ms Helen Thrush
Mr Maruping Lekwene	Prof Chris de Beer
Dr Yvonne Muthien	Prof Connie Mokadi
Prof Vishnu Padayachee	Mr Vincent Mlombo

The Interim Councils would play a key role in the further establishment of the universities. In terms of the Act an Interim Council is established for a period of six months, which can be (and was) extended by a further six months. The key task of the Interim Councils was to establish the first full Councils of each University, to appoint staff and an interim Head of each university and to guide the early development of the universities.

From the moment of their appointment, the Interim Councils and staff and subsequently the full Councils, had to be involved in all decision making and this requirement expanded the task of the DHET and NUPMT in the infrastructure planning and implementation work ahead. Collaboration commenced at a joint induction workshop held with both Interim Councils on the 5 and 6 July 2013 ahead of the public announcement by President Zuma. Formal promulgation of both universities in the following month removed the last barrier to full scale construction implementation, and a series of contracts was put in place in both provinces to enable immediate renovation work for the 2014 academic year and an October 2014 construction start on new buildings needed in time for the 2016 academic year.

## 2.5. DEVELOPMENT TIMELINE SUMMARY

Date	Events
25 March 2010	Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, announced the establishment of two task teams to explore appropriate models for new universities in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape.
September 2011	Final Report on the Establishment of the New Universities in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces submitted to the Minister
October 2011	NUPMT commences work on identification of sites for UMP & SPU.
23 February 2012	MOA is signed between DHET and Wits formally establishing the New Universities Project Management Team (NUPMT)
June 2012	Recommendations on the Seats for the New Universities published
5 July 2012	President J Zuma announces the seats of the new universities as the inner-city of Kimberley and the Lowveld College of Agriculture in Nelspruit
July 2012	Development Framework for the Establishment of New Universities in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces is completed, setting out the unfolding vision for the new universities.
31 August 2012	<p>In Government Gazette No 35645, the Minister calls for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• comment on the Development Framework for Establishment of New Universities in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces, and</li> <li>• submission of suggested names for the universities</li> </ul>
18 September 2012	DHET received 22 responses to call for comments on the development framework and the naming of universities
30 September 2012	Submission to National Treasury of detailed feasibility studies for the new universities
November 2012	National Treasury confirmed an allocation of slightly more than R2billion over the 2012/14 – 2015/16 Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) for development of the new universities
7 December 2012	By notice in the Government Gazette, the Minister of Higher Education and training, Dr Blade Nzimande invites nominations for appointment of members of the Interim Council for each of the new universities
January 2013	A range of partnerships with universities established to support academic programme development and delivery



Date	Events
19 March 2013	Minister of Higher Education & Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, meets with the Northern Cape Premier's Intergovernmental Forum to share the vision for the new university in the Northern Cape and the progress made. After the meeting, the Minister, Premier of the Northern Cape, Executive Mayors of the Frances Baard District Municipality and the Sol Plaatje Local Municipality and the Minister of Public Works sign the Record of Intention to facilitate the land assembly process.
11 April 2013	Minister of Higher Education & Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, meets with the Mpumalanga Premier's Intergovernmental Forum to share the vision for the new university in Mpumalanga and the progress made. After the meeting, the Minister, Premier of Mpumalanga, Executive Mayor of the Mbombela Local Municipality and the Minister of Public Works sign the Record of Intention to facilitate the land assembly process.
April 2013	Detailed spatial plans for the university are completed
5 – 6 July 2013	Workshop held to brief the Interim Council of both universities on the planning work that has already been undertaken by the DHET and NUPMT
25 July 2013	<p>President Zuma announces the new Interim Council and names of both universities at the Union Buildings in Pretoria.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sol Plaatje University Interim Council Members: Ms Jennie Glennie (Chairperson), Mr A Madonsela, Prof M Padayachee, Dr Y Muthien, Dr M Lekwene</li> <li>• University of Mpumalanga Interim Council Members: Dr M Mabunda, Prof C Mokadi, Ms H Thrush, Prof C de Beer and Mr V Mlombo</li> </ul>
22 August 2013	By notice in the Government Gazette 36771: The Minister of Higher Education and Training formally establishes the Sol Plaatje University as a public University in terms of section 20 of the Higher Education Act of 1997, announces the names of the Interim Council and publishes the Record of Intention to Facilitate the Rapid Establishment of the new University on Publicly Owned Land
23 August 2013	By notice in the Government Gazette 36772: The Minister of Higher Education and Training formally establishes the University of Mpumalanga as a public University in terms of section 20 of the Higher Education Act of 1997, announces the names of the Interim Council and publishes the Record of Intention to Facilitate the Rapid Establishment of the new University on Publicly Owned Land.
27 August 2013	First official meeting of the University of Mpumalanga Interim Council
1 September 2013	Prof Y Ballim appointed as Interim Head of SPU

<b>Date</b>	<b>Events</b>
3 September 2013	First official meeting of the Sol Plaatje Interim Council
9 October 2013	Prof R Mogotlane appointed as Interim Head of UMP
18 September 2013	Winners of the Architectural Competition for Sol Plaatje University announced as a build-up to the main launch event
19 September 2013	Formal launch of the Sol Plaatje University (SPU)
30 October 2013	Winners of the Architectural Competition for the University of Mpumalanga announced as a build-up to the main launch event
31 October 2013	Formal launch of the University of Mpumalanga (UMP)
February 2014	Start of first academic year with a student enrolment of 124 students at SPU and 505 students at UMP
April 2014	Appointment of the project managers to manage construction of new infrastructure for SPU and UMP (Aecom and Ariya respectively)
14 August 2014	Appointment of full Council of the University of Mpumalanga
19 August 2014	Appointment of full Council of the Sol Plaatje University
September 2014	Main contractors appointed under framework contacts for construction of new buildings
October 2014	Start of construction of new building and infrastructure
24 October 2014	Joint MOA signed between DHET, UMP, SPU and WITS, confirming UMP and SPU's support for WITS's continued role in planning and delivery of infrastructure up until 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2016.
1 November 2014	Prof Thoko Mayekiso appointed as first Vice Chancellor and Principal of University of Mpumalanga
February 2015	Start of the second academic year with a student enrolment of 337 students at SPU and 828 students at UMP
1 April 2015	Prof Yunus Ballim appointed as first Vice-Chancellor and Principal of Sol Plaatje University
February 2016	Completion of first new buildings at each university facilitates the enrolment of 700 students at SPU and 1255 students at UMP
1 April 2016	SPU and UMP take over full responsibility for further infrastructure delivery and NUPMT commence close out process
2 April 2016	Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa inaugurated as Chancellor of UMP
23 April 2016	Judge Steven Arnold Majiedt inaugurated as Chancellor of SPU

## REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- 2-1 Department of Higher Education and Training. (2011) Final Report on the Establishment of new Universities in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces. Republic of South Africa.
- 2-2 Van Broekhuizen, H. (2016) Graduate unemployment and Higher Education Institutions in South Africa. Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 08/16.
- 2-3 Department of Higher Education and Training. (2016) Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2014. Republic of South Africa.
- 2-4 Department of Higher Education and Training. (2013) White Paper for Post-School Education and Training: Building an expanded, effective and integrated Post-School System. Republic of South Africa.
- 2-5 Council for Higher Education. (2011) Advice to the Minister of Higher Education and Training on the Establishment of New Universities in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape.
- 2-6 Department of Higher Education and Training. (2012) Development Framework for New Universities in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga. Government Gazette. (Notice 705. No. 35645).