

# Close out Report

of the New Universities Project Management Team on the

Development of New Universities in  
Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape

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UNIVERSITY OF  
MPUMALANGA



SOL PLAATJE  
UNIVERSITY



WITS  
UNIVERSITY



higher education  
& training

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

# Chapter 5

Academic and institutional development



## 5. Academic and Institutional Development

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It is the academic vision that determines the institutional, spatial and infrastructure planning for the new universities. Pivotal to the academic planning and development was the publication by DHET of a *Development Framework* <sup>[5-1]</sup> setting out government's unfolding vision for the two universities, including the vision that these must become institutions of excellence, able to attract the best academics and students across South Africa and beyond. This goal has had a profound impact on all areas of planning, including academic, spatial and infrastructure planning.

### 5.1. ACADEMIC VISION

From a national perspective the new institutions are intended to introduce new university level capacity into the country as a whole. Although the two universities are established in Northern Cape and Mpumalanga provinces, it is essential that the universities are seen not only as provincial institutions but as a national competency with a footprint on an international level. The new institutions must become fully fledged universities that are able to attract the best academics in South Africa, the continent and the world and, each aspiring to be a destination of choice for qualifying school leavers. The hallmark of these new universities must be academic excellence underpinned by quality leadership.

The *Development Framework* for the university in Mpumalanga highlighted the following fields of study and qualification types as 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.

It was further envisioned that the university 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.

The preliminary areas of specialisation for the Sol Plaatje University (SPU) identified in the *Development Framework*, included:

- 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.

Sol Plaatje University is envisioned as a comprehensive institution offering a programme mix of technical, vocational, professional and academic disciplines and qualification types such as Higher Certificates, Advanced Certificates, Diplomas and Bachelor's degrees. In addition, the *Development Framework* anticipated the development of 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.

## **5.2. PRELIMINARY PLANNING MODALITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS**

The appointment of an Academic Programme manager to the NUMPT provided the impetus to expedite the academic planning processes. A full preliminary Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) for each institution was developed as a planning foundation for space requirements, allowing significant flexibility to accommodate any changes that might be envisaged by the universities, when established.

Academic Champions and Academic Working Groups (AWGs) were formed to consider the PQM and academic support needed for these new institutions in the context of the priorities set forth in the *Development Framework*, including the development of programmes in their CESM categories in partnership with specific sponsoring universities. The AWGs were responsible for identification of institutional arrangements that needed to be put into place for enabling programme offerings in 2014 at the start of the academic year. The AWGs consisted of experienced senior academic staff from established universities willing to assist the new universities to develop their academic offering. The Working Groups addressed the academic administrative requirements, recruitment of students and preparations towards applications in 2013 and admission in 2014. Each academic focus group investigated the role of the sponsoring, or partner institution in terms of curriculum.

Partnerships with existing universities operating within prioritised fields were negotiated to ensure that quality assurance issues were addressed and human resources were recruited and developed to enable the effective small-scale start-up of programmes in 2014, and that the longer-term development trajectory would lead to sustainability. These partnerships enabled the deployment of academics in partner institutions to develop the submissions for

programme accreditation with the Council on Higher Education (CHE). Sponsoring universities also provided teaching staff under Memorandums of Agreement (MoAs) for the start-up of programmes in 2014. Partner universities that contributed to the development of the 2014 programmes were:

- Agriculture (University of Mpumalanga):- University of Pretoria (UP)
- Hospitality (University of Mpumalanga):- University of Johannesburg (UJ)
- Education (University of Mpumalanga):- University of Johannesburg (UJ) at Siyabuswa Campus
- Information Technology (Sol Plaatje University):- Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)
- Life and Physical Sciences (Sol Plaatje University):- University of the Free State (UFS)

The 2014 start-up programme in Mpumalanga included the provision of the Bachelor in Agriculture (Extension and Rural Development) degree; a Diploma in Hospitality Management; and the Bachelor of Education (Foundation Phase) degree at the Siyabuswa campus. The 2014 start-up programme for the university in the Northern Cape included the provision of Diplomas in Information Communication Technology (Applications Development), Retail Business Management and the Bachelor of Education degree (specialising in Maths, Science and Technology). A key principle that informed the development of the PQM was the need to avoid duplication and to establish a few unique fields of study. The academic footprint provided by the 2014 start-up programmes was linked to the long-term development of unique fields of study that are expected to develop over time. Science, engineering and technology programmes will feature prominently at both institutions.

The promulgation of the new universities and the appointment of Interim Councils in July 2013 enabled an important shift in responsibility for academic planning to the new institutions and their newly appointed academic staff.

### **5.3. 2014 START-UP**

Planning for the 2014 academic start included the need to respond to a first intake of students by 2014 as described in Table 5.1

**Table 5.1: 2014 – First-year Student Enrolments**

University of Mpumalanga		Sol Plaatje University	
Programme	No of Students	Programme	No of Students
B Ed Foundation Phase Teaching, Siyabuswa Campus	108	B Ed	47
B Agric at the LCA campus	20	Retail Management Diploma	40
Hospitality Management Diploma at the MRTT	23	IT Diploma	40
<b>Total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>127</b>

With the establishment of both universities in 2013, the Interim Councils and university leadership assumed responsibility for academic development and are engaged in an ongoing process of refining the PQM of both institutions. Intake of students in the 2015 academic year expanded to 828 at the UMP and 337 at SPU. The intake expanded further in the 2016 academic year to 1255 at the UMP and 700 at SPU.

#### **5.4. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Since late 2015, the two universities have had full and sole responsibility for ongoing institutional development. Both universities have also established core capacity to manage the massive infrastructure development challenges ahead, and the NUPMT has supported this development, which is dealt with in the final chapter of this report, namely *Handover and Close Out*.

This section of the report reviews the institutional establishment and growth of the two universities up to 31 March 2016, when full responsibility for all further development was handed over by the NUPMT to the new universities.

In the six years since 25 March 2010, when the Minister of Higher Education and Training announced the establishment of two task teams to explore appropriate models for the new universities, both universities have been established and achieved some size. The University of Mpumalanga (UMP) has 238 staff and 1255 students covering nine programmes and Sol Plaatje University (SPU) has 112 staff with 700 students, also with nine different programmes. In most instances, these programmes were established in new and refurbished infrastructure for teaching, learning and accommodation.

The Project Time Line at the end of Chapter 2 covers the specific milestones reached during this six-year period, from concept to proclamation and from an interim state of governance and management with only a handful of staff and students, to institutions that have achieved a high degree of stability and now manage their own academic, administrative, research and developmental requirements internally. Reference is also made in the time line to the legislative Acts underpinning the establishment of these two institutions.

## **5.5. GOVERNANCE OF THE UNIVERSITIES**

The Interim Councils of SPU and UMP were established by proclamation on 22 and 23 August 2013 respectively, attending a joint workshop addressed by the Minister of Higher Education and Training. They began their initial deliberations that same night with the first formal Interim Council meetings being held in August and September 2013.

Prior to the establishment of the Interim Councils, the NUPMT had convened a task group to develop a full set of institutional guidelines<sup>[5-2]</sup> as an interim measure to enable the immediate functioning and governance of the university. These guidelines covered:

- Institutional governance
- Office of the Registrar
- Student governance
- Academic programmes
- Human resources
- Information and communication technology (ICT)
- Finance
- Library and information sciences Facilities management

While these guidelines provided a springboard enabling the immediate functioning of the fledgling institutions, no actual systems such as payroll, procurement processes, creditors and debtors management were in place. Since the institutions needed to be able to function from the start, a service provider was engaged to fulfil these functions until the universities established their own finance capacity, including the costly hardware and software required and the operational staff needed.

Interim Vice Chancellors were appointed with basic interim management teams to support them. These interim structures were given 12 months in which to establish more permanent governance and management structures.

One of the main challenges during the start-up phase of both new universities was the temporary nature of both the Interim Council as well as the Executive Management – the latter finding that, as the institution was very small, a larger executive team was not deemed to be affordable, and executive team members ended up carrying out a multitude of interdisciplinary functions. Perhaps the permanent appointment of an executive team from the very beginning might have brought greater stability at an earlier stage.

In August 2014, full councils were inaugurated and immediately began the process of recruiting permanent executive management staff, and establishing formal governance protocols to allow for institutional decision making in line with their respective statutes. This process has continued.

By the beginning of 2016, university Chancellors had been appointed, Vice Chancellors had been inaugurated and permanent Committees of Council were operative, including an Executive Committee of Council, with appropriate secretariat support functions.

## **5.6. EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT AND STAFF – BY MAY 2016 – POST HANDOVER**

From the outset, the NUPMT played a critical role in supporting staff recruitment for both universities. By 2016, when the universities had fully taken over this function, the UMP

Executive consisted of a Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic, a Deputy Vice Chancellor: Planning and Institutional Support, an Executive Director: Finance, an Executive Director: Human Resources, a Dean of Students and a Registrar. A full-time Campus Director was appointed on the Siyabuswa Campus as well as a Senior Director: New Infrastructure to take over this massive responsibility.

At SPU, the Vice Chancellor was supported by a Chief Operating Officer and a Registrar. A Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic was still to be appointed.

UMP had a total staff complement of 230, including 66 academic staff (ratio of 3.5 administrative staff to 1 academic staff) covering all of the specific functional requirements within a university. This number included staff on the Siyabuswa campus. SPU had a total staff of 112, of which 50 were academic (approximate ratio of 1.9 administrative staff to 1 academic staff). The main reason for this difference, given that the national higher education sector ratio is 2.1:1, is that UMP has a large contingent of non-academic staff on the farm in support of its agricultural programmes.

In addition to the SPU staff totals, a further nine contract staff were employed on the Galeshewe campus in Kimberley in a programme taken over from the National Institute of Higher Education (NIHE), Northern Cape, finalising the last academic year of BEd students from North West and Free State universities. These are administrative staff as the academic teaching is undertaken by staff from the other two universities. These contracts for SPU staff were scheduled to terminate at the end of December 2016.

Significant energy was invested with some success between September 2015 and March 2016 to expand institutional capacity in the area of infrastructure development and maintenance, although this function still remained an area at risk at the time of handover. Director level appointments had been made at both universities and efforts were still underway to recruit capacity to support these posts. Significant progress has been made since then by the universities themselves.

## **5.7. STUDENT ENROLMENTS AND ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES AT TIME OF HANDOVER**

### **5.7.1 University of Mpumalanga**

Additional courses introduced at UMP in 2016 include an Advanced Diploma in Agriculture, BSc Agriculture, Bachelor of Development Studies, Diploma in Nature Conservation, Diploma in ICT (See Table 5.2).



**Table 5.2: UMP 2016 Registration Statistics (1<sup>st</sup> Entering and Returning Students)**

<b>NO.</b>	<b>NAME OF PROGRAMME</b>	<b>2016</b>
1.	Advanced Diploma in Agriculture	0
2.	Bachelor of Agriculture	32
3.	BSc Agriculture	0
4.	Bachelor of Development Studies	0
5.	Diploma in Agriculture in Plant Production	134
6.	Diploma in Nature Conservation	0
7.	Diploma in Information Communication Technology	0
8.	Diploma in Hospitality Management	15
9.	Bachelor Education Foundation Phase	106
<b>NEW ENROLMENTS 2016</b>		<b>287</b>
<b>RETURNING STUDENTS</b>		<b>968</b>
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS 2016</b>		<b>1255</b>

### 5.7.2 Sol Plaatje University

The University introduced three new programmes in 2016 in the form of generic BA, BSc and BCom courses (see Table 5.2).

**Table 5.2: SPU 2016 Registration Statistics (1<sup>st</sup> Entering and Returning Students)**

<b>NO.</b>	<b>NAME OF PROGRAMME</b>	<b>2016</b>
1.	Generic BA	54
2.	Higher Cert. Heritage Studies	21
3.	BSc Data Science	24
4.	Diploma ICT	50
5.	BSc	32
6.	BCom	14
7.	Diploma Retail Management	30
8.	BEd Senior Phase and FET	113
9.	BEd Intermediate Phase	66
<b>NEW ENROLMENTS 2016</b>		<b>296</b>
<b>RETURNING STUDENTS</b>		<b>404</b>
<b>TOTAL STUDENTS 2016</b>		<b>700</b>

## 5.8. PERIPHERAL INSTITUTIONAL IMPACT AND CHANGES

### 5.8.1 Required actions

The NUPMT provided senior management support to the administrative processes necessary to:

- disestablish the National Institutes for Higher Education (NIHE) in both provinces;
- incorporate the Lowveld College of Agriculture into the University of Mpumalanga;
- transfer the Siyabuswa Campus to the University of Mpumalanga.

### 5.8.2 National Institutes for Higher Education (NIHE) in both Provinces

A natural consequence of the establishment of the two new universities in Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape respectively was that the function and purpose of the National Institutes for Higher Education in each of these provinces became redundant. The provisions of the Higher Education Act No 101 do not allow for the incorporation of an institute that is not a

public higher education institute. After going through all of the required processes in terms of this Act, the Minister determined that these two institutes should be disestablished.

Both NIHEs achieved operational closure on 31 December 2014 in full compliance with related legislation. After extensive consultation with staff of the two NIHEs and the two new universities, 19 of the 27 staff in the Mpumalanga NIHE were offered posts with the UMP and one with a cleaning company contracted to the UMP. From the Northern Cape NIHE 32 of the 36 staff were offered posts with SPU.

The Northern Cape NIHE had accepted an administrative role in providing facilities in Kimberley (at the Galeshewe Campus) while the teaching duties were carried out by academic staff from the universities which had registered the students. This administrative role was taken over by SPU and was due to come to a close at the end of 2016 with the final students being “taught-out”. It was envisaged that any continuing responsibilities such as supplementary exams would be undertaken by the respective universities whose students they are.

While there were no legal challenges of a labour relations nature arising from the Mpumalanga NIHE disestablishment, one member of the NIHE staff in Kimberley chose to challenge not being offered a post with Sol Plaatje University. This matter was referred by the local CCMA to the Labour Court in Cape Town. Nothing further was heard of it after March 2015 and it is believed that the matter was dropped. A provision was included in the transfer of reserves from the NIHE NC to SPU should the matter be pursued further.

In both institutions, challenges were received from external contractors relating to the non-continuation of their contracts and/or the non-payment of agreed fees. Both matters were subsequently dropped.

An issue that existed between the NIHE Mpumalanga and the Public Protector was fully resolved and the matter closed without any further financial exposure.

The legal closures of the two institutions took place on 31 March 2015. All assets were transferred to the two receiving universities, all accounts closed, all financial matters fully audited and the final Annual Reports signed off and submitted to the DHET. All files that were required to be kept have been archived with UMP and SPU respectively. No further matters require attention as far as these two institutions are concerned.

### **5.8.2 The Lowveld College of Agriculture**

In terms of the agreement reached between the Ministers of Higher Education and Training and of Public Works, as well as the Premier of Mpumalanga Province as published in Government Gazette No 36772 of 22 August 2013, the Lowveld College of Agriculture (LCA) was to be incorporated into the newly established UMP with effect from 1 January 2015. This was later confirmed specifically under Government Gazette No 38085 of 10 October 2014. In keeping with the requirements of the legislation, the incorporation was finalised and all assets and staff (without loss of benefits) were transferred to the new university on the effective date.

The Marapyane campus of the LCA was not part of this incorporation and, while members of staff at this campus, being employees of the LCA, were transferred to the UMP, the Marapyane campus itself remained the property and the responsibility of the Mpumalanga Province.

### **5.8.3 Siyabuswa campus**

Originally developed through the University of Johannesburg (UJ) to teach BEd programmes, and administered as part of the responsibilities of the NIHE Mpumalanga, agreement was reached that the Siyabuswa Campus would be transferred to the UMP through a transitional process that would see the end of UJ involvement at the end of the 2016 academic year. By March 2016 this campus was still a joint venture between the UMP and UJ but was due to become the sole responsibility of the UMP post 2016.

Significant infrastructural development (both renovations and new builds) were undertaken on this campus, initially under the NIHE mandate and after closure of NIHE, under the direction of the University itself.

## **5.9. INFRASTRUCTURE RESPONSIBILITY AND OUTSTANDING INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES**

On 31 March 2016, the responsibility for infrastructure was formally transferred to each university in accordance with the MOA between DHET and Wits, supported by the joint MOA between DHET, UMP, SPU and Wits, which was signed on 24 October 2014. With effect from 1 April, technical competencies previously reporting to the Project Management Team were successfully contracted by the new universities themselves and have since reported to the respective Infrastructure Directors of each university, ensuring continuity in the ongoing planning and delivery of infrastructure. The final section of this report describes the process of infrastructure handover and the project close-out process planned for the year ahead.

Both UMP and SPU are still funded through DHET grants which are largely determined by the budgetary requirements each year. The time will come however, when both new universities must start receiving government subsidies calculated on the same basis as every other university in the system.

A further challenge confronting each university for some time to come is reaching a point of stability in terms of academic programmes and student numbers, that allows for economic deployment of teaching and administrative staff. At the time of the PMT project close out in July 2017, some staff were still having to carry out several functions in order to meet the institutional and teaching demands which, in an established university, would probably be carried out by significantly more staff.

## **REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

5-1 Department of Higher Education and Training. (2012) Development Framework for New Universities in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga. Government Gazette. (Notice 705. No. 35645).

5-2 New Universities. Governance, Academic and Administrative Guidelines for the establishment of a New University, December 2012