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GENERAL NOTICE

NOTICE 426 OF 2012

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

CALL FOR COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROVISION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

I, Dr Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, MP, Minister of Higher Education and Training, hereby publish the Draft *Policy Framework for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities* for public comment. The Policy Framework is published in terms of section 3, read with section 69 of the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997, that the Minister, after consultation with the CHE must determine policy on higher education and publish such policy by notice in the Gazette; and, that the Minister may make regulations consistent with this act on any policy matter as contemplated in section 3.

The *Draft Policy Framework for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities* is part of a broader focus on building the capacity of the education system but focuses primarily on university education because of its unique features. Through this policy framework, the Minister of Higher Education and Training seeks to resolve many areas of uncertainty and provide strong support for the progressive development of South African distance higher education as an indispensable and integral component of our national higher education system.

Given the growing demand for higher education, and international evidence that distance education can, under certain conditions, provide high quality educational opportunity more cost-efficiently and cost-effectively than traditional face-to-face provision, it seems logical to expand distance education provision in an orderly manner in which access and quality issues are at the forefront. In particular, the Minister sees the need for collaborative development of a national set of programmes targeted at South Africa's burgeoning unemployed/ not in education youth designed to enable them to become financially productive and socially invested members of society. This initiative would be most appropriately located at the FET/HET interface. In addition, there is need for the development of high quality formal professional qualifications for unemployed graduates to address national priorities such as the increased demand for teachers and social workers.

The Draft Policy Framework published for public comment provides a policy framework for the expansion and regulation of quality distance education at higher education institutions to

meet these needs. It provides an overview of the policy context, describes the distinctiveness and purpose of distance higher education, identifies mechanisms for steering distance education provisioning and for creating an enabling environment for quality distance higher education.

The full document is available at the Department of Higher Education and Training's website (www.dhet.gov.za).

All interested persons and organizations are invited to comment on the draft Policy Framework. Comments should reach the Department not later than 31 days after the publication of this gazette.

Comments should be directed to the Dr E L Van Staden (email: vanstaden.e@dhet.gov.za).

The name, address, telephone number and fax number of the person, governing body or organization responsible for submitting comments must also be provided.

Dr Bonginkosi Emmanuel Nzimande, MP
Minister of Higher Education and Training
Date: 02/05/12

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