

27 May 2019

Minister Pandor appoints a Ministerial Task Team to advise on Matters relating to Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Violence in South African Universities

The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr. Naledi Pandor approved on Friday, 24 May 2019, the appointment of a Ministerial Task Team to advise the Minister on Matters relating to sexual harassment and gender-based violence in public universities in South Africa.

The nine-member team are as follows:

- Lisa Vetten
- Dr Babalwa Magoqwana
- Professor Jackie Dugard
- Professor Pumla Gqola
- Dr Robert Morrell
- Jerome September
- Professor Malehoko Tshoaedi
- Corinne Knowles

- A Student Representative nominated by the South African Union of Students (SAUS)

The Task Team is appointed for a period of 12 months, starting in June, 2019.

The appointment of the Ministerial Task Team is part of the Department of Higher Education and Training's response to an open letter written by a group of academics to the Minister in March 2019.

Following the open letter, Minister Pandor met with the group of academic to discuss the proposals they made. The meeting agreed that addressing sexual harassment and gender-based harm decisively will allow for a focus on “fundamental academic questions” and restore “academic cultures that “respect freedom and citizenship of all”.

In addition to appointing the Ministerial Task Team to advice on Gender Based Violence in Universities, the Department of Higher Education and Training, has

released the Policy Framework to address Gender-based Violence in the Post-School Education and Training sector for public comment.

Once in place, the Policy Framework will provide an important frame for addressing many of the concerns that the academics raised with her.

The vision of the Policy Framework is that “everyone has the right to live, study and work freely and safely in PSET institutions without any fear of sexual/gender-based intimidation, harassment, abuse, rape or other forms of sexual/gender-based harm”.

The Ministerial Task Team on sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the university sector, will advise the Minister and the Department on the following matters:

- The effective introduction and implementation of the policy framework to address gender-based violence, with a specific focus on universities;

- A possible enquiry into sexual harassment, gender-based violence and gender-based harm in the university sector, considering work that has already been carried out;
- Measures to ensure that sexual offenders do not escape justice and repeat offences in other institutions;
- Appropriate levels of support to be put in place at public universities;
- Mechanisms and processes to report on sexual offences in the sector, in line with the policy framework, with a view of improving monitoring and reporting; and
- Other possible interventions to improve institutional responses to gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

The Ministerial Task Team will also be requested to:

- Identify areas of good practice in reporting and managing gender-based harm, and support

mechanisms, that could be replicated in the sector;
and

- Identify policy weaknesses across institutions that may be contributing to failures of institutions to adequately manage sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

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