

FOREWORD BY THE MINISTER

The set of proposals that make up the Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework promises to make a substantial and timely contribution to the effectiveness, composition, and sustainability of our university system.

The Framework should be read in the context of recent key policy documents, such as the *White Paper for Post-School Education & Training: Building an Expanded, Effective and Integrated Post-School System* (November 2013), which lays out the priorities for the post-school education and training system in South Africa. It represents a vision for an integrated system of post-school education and training, with all sectors, including higher education, playing their role as parts of a coherent but differentiated whole. Furthermore, it emphasises that obtaining access to an institution is not sufficient in itself, but that the education provided must be of high quality.

The emphasis on quality in all the roles of a university (teaching, research and social engagement) is a high priority for the sector. Achieving this depends to a large extent on the availability of adequate numbers of capable staff at our universities, who are fully representative of a democratic South Africa.

It is no secret that the higher education sector currently finds itself in somewhat of a crisis in relation to the size, composition and capacity of its academic staff.

The challenge is multi-faceted, having to do with the slow pace of transformation, regeneration and change, the ageing workforce, developments in higher education worldwide that demand ever greater levels of expertise from staff, the relatively under qualified academic staff workforce, and low numbers of postgraduate students representing an inadequate pipeline for the recruitment of future academics.

Moreover, national growth projections for student numbers over the next five years point to the need to rapidly upscale the recruitment of academic staff. It is calculated that the sector will need to recruit at least 1 200 new academics per annum to respond to historical backlogs, cater for staff attrition and to accommodate planned growth. Recruitment efforts will need to prioritise

the recruitment of black and women academics in order to change the demographic profile of the sector and increase the pace of transformation in the sector.

The Department of Higher Education and Training's *Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUF)* – a *Transformative, Comprehensive Approach to Building Capacity and Developing Future Generations of Academics* initiative represents a bold and decisive response to these challenges.

The SSAUF has built on previous investigations and international experience and takes as a starting point the urgent and challenging imperative to recruit, support and retain black and female academic staff to address their very serious under-representation at all levels in the sector. It recognises the need for more explicit attention to be paid to creating much wider awareness of academic work as a career that is both attractive and attainable for those with ability, and sets out pathways for new and existing staff through which staff can be effectively developed, inducted and supported to embark on and succeed in an academic career.

The SSAUF is multi-pronged, nationally coordinated, premised from the outset on new permanent posts, and aims to provide effective induction into and development of all aspects of the academic job: teaching, research, social engagement, and academic leadership and management.

The university sector is invited to partner with the Department of Higher Education and Training in this important endeavour and to contribute to the goal of developing a national higher education system of high quality that is truly representative, transformed, responsive to the needs of South African society, and is globally competitive.



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Date:  27/02/2015