



# higher education & training

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Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

## *Research Outputs*

### *Communique 1 of 2023 – 14 August 2023*

**To all Deputy Vice-Chancellors for Research and Senior Directors of Research**

As you are aware, the Department of Higher Education and Training (the Department/DHET) annually disburses significant funding to the 26 public universities under the Research Outputs Policy (2015). This framework, which has been in existence for more than twenty years, has incentivized and rewarded the production of research publications, research Masters' graduates and doctoral graduates in compliance with the framework. The impact of this framework and the disbursements on the Higher Education sector has been significant and has led to exponential growth in publications produced by South African academics. In this year alone, an amount of more than R5.4 billion was disbursed to universities for their publications and graduate outputs during 2021 and 2022.

However, despite the significant growth in the volume and quantum of output, various studies over the past ten years have unfortunately also revealed that the policy instrument has produced several unintended negative consequences. Studies conducted by the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University, on behalf of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and the Department, have illustrated how a minority of academics have begun to game the system through publications in predatory journals, listing of ghost affiliations and engaging in salami slicing to maximize the number of submissions and the like.

Against this background the Department approved a three-year collaborative programme, funded under the University Capacity Development Programme, to investigate ways in which the current policy framework can be improved, and more specifically, how it can be revised to minimize unethical and questionable publication practices by South African academics.

The programme, entitled the **COLLABORATIVE PROJECT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLICATIONS**, will be housed at CREST with Prof. Johann Mouton as the Project leader, in partnership with Prof. Elisha Chiware from the Cape Peninsula

University of Technology. The project is managed by a project team which includes project leaders and representatives from DHET, the National Research Foundation, Universities South Africa, ASSAf and the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association. The project formally commenced on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2023 and must be completed by the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2026.

Given the strategic importance of this project, the project team will also constitute a **Consultative Stakeholders Forum** which will consist of a representative of every one of the public universities as well as other stakeholders. Our preference would be that either the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research or Senior Director of Research at a university represent their respective universities on this important Forum.

The aim of this communicate is not only to inform you of this important new initiative, but specifically to ask that you provide the project team with your full co-operation in the project when requested. The success of this initiative will largely depend on the inputs and engagements of all stakeholders over the next three years and your expertise and experience as senior science managers at our universities is essential to achieving the goals of the project.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Marcia Socikwa**

**Deputy Director-Director: University Education Branch**

**Date:** 14.08.2023