

MEDIA STATEMENT

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ATTENTION: News Editors/ Reports

For Immediate use:

MINISTER NZIMANDE MAKES MORE APPOINTMENTS TO THE MINISTERIAL TASK TEAM ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARM AT UNIVERSITIES

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Dr Blade Nzimande has appointed Professor Sibongile Muthwa as Chairperson of the Ministerial Task Team to advise him on matters of sexual harassment and gender-based violence and harm in South African universities. Professor Muthwa is the Vice Chancellor of Nelson Mandela University.

The Minister has thanked Professor Muthwa for agreeing to take on this important task, in addition to her significant work within the higher education system.

The Minister has also appointed three additional members to the Ministerial Task Team to ensure greater representation from Historically Disadvantaged Institutions and students: Professor Pamela Dube (Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University of the Western Cape), Dr Mercy Mushwana (from the University of Venda), as well as one additional student member appointed by the South African Union of Students (SAUS), Moliehi Rajonase.

The full composition of the Task Team is: Professor Sibongile Muthwa (Chairperson); Professor Pamela Dube; Ms Lisa Vetten; Professor Jackie Dugard; Dr Babalwa Magoqwana; Mr Jerome September; Dr Robert Morrell; Dr Mercy Mushwana; Professor Pumla Gqola; Professor Malehoko Tshoedi; Ms Corinne Knowles; Ms Palomina Jama and Ms Moliehi Rajonase.

“The Ministerial Task Team commenced its work in July 2019. It has begun analysing policy and processes in all public universities, with a view to advising me on policy gaps and minimum standards for policy, processes and support systems in place to manage and prevent gender-based violence within the higher education system,” said Minister Nzimande.

The Task Team is also exploring the possibility of consultations within the sector to take place in the early part of 2020, which will inform the work and recommendations to be made to the Minister.

In preparation for the new academic year, the Minister and the Task Team urge that every university should ensure that advocacy and awareness work relating to sexual

harassment and gender-based violence, including a focus on university policies and codes of conduct, should take place during university orientation weeks in the 2020 academic year.

“Visible campaigns and initiatives during orientation week will form part of the 365-day focus on gender-based violence and harm and will ensure that all students and staff of universities are aware of the university policies that apply to them and the support and referral services available to them. Ultimately, gender-based violence and harm should be addressed every day on every campus in every institution,” said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande further said that the Department of Higher Education and Training is committed to working together with Universities South Africa, Higher Health and all relevant institutions, to support the sector to improve its responses and actions in this critical area of work, including addressing the underlying causes of sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

The Terms of Reference of the Task Team are as follows:

- To advise the Minister and the Department of Higher Education and Training on the effective introduction and implementation of the policy framework to address gender-based violence, with a specific focus on universities;
- To advise the Minister on a possible enquiry into sexual harassment, gender-based violence and gender-based harm in the university sector, taking into account work that has already been carried out, and identifying gaps that require investigation;
- To advise the Minister on possible measures to ensure that sexual offenders do not escape justice and repeat offences in other institutions;
- To advise the Minister on appropriate levels of support to be put in place at public universities;
- To identify areas of good practice in reporting and managing gender-based harm, and support mechanisms, that could be replicated in the sector;
- To identify policy weaknesses across institutions that may be contributing to failures of institutions to adequately manage sexual harassment and gender-based violence;
- To advise on 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
- To advise on other possible interventions to improve institutional responses to gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

The Ministerial Task Team may advise on other matters that fall within the scope of improving institutional and national responses relating to sexual harassment and gender-based violence and harm.

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