



**MINISTRY  
HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**Statement by the Minister of Higher Education and Training**

**Dr Blade Nzimande**

**Incorporation of the Lowveld College of Agriculture (Mbombela Campus) into the  
University of Mpumalanga**

**10 October 2014**

Government has adopted a range of strategies to expand the country's post school education system, increasing the opportunities available to a growing number of qualifying school leavers. Since the transition to democracy, much has been done to increase the capacity and efficiency of existing institutions. The Department of Higher Education and Training has committed itself to expand access to education and training opportunities for the youth by increasing the ratio of young people in education, employment and training to 1.6 million enrolments in 2030.

On 22 August 2013 I established the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) in terms of section 20 of the Higher Education Act, 1997, as amended, in Government Gazette No. 631, Notice No. 36772. Today I am pleased to declare that the Lowveld College of Agriculture will become an incorporated subdivision of UMP with effect from January 2015. This declaration is published in the Government Gazette (number 38085 published on 10 October 2014), under of section 21 of the Higher Education Act (101 of 1997), as amended), In essence, this means that all students studying at LCA and staff employed to deliver the diploma programme at LCA, will on the 1 January 2015 become students and staff of UMP.

This incorporation is based on agreements that have been reached on a number of issues to ensure that all aspects are dealt with legally and in the best interests of all parties concerned. These include: the transfer of contracts of employment of staff in the employ of the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Environment and Land Affairs (DARDLEA) (the old employer) who are deployed full time at the Lowveld College of Agriculture (LCA) to support the Diploma in Agriculture, to the University of Mpumalanga (UMP)(the new employer); the transfer of the portions of land identified in the Record of Intention signed jointly by myself (representing DHET), the Premier of Mpumalanga and the Minister of Public Works; and the academic programmes and right to award diplomas to qualifying students. These agreements are all published in the Schedule of the notice in the Government Gazette incorporating LCA into UMP.

The notice of incorporation will not interrupt current processes underway regarding the transfer of DARDLEA employees' contracts to UMP. DARDLEA and UMP, in consultation with the affected employees and their recognised representative bodies, must work together to reach an agreement on or before the date of incorporation on all aspects regarding the employees who will be transferred to UMP, including the terms and conditions applicable to such transfers. I trust that this process will be finalised soon so that come 1 January 2015, UMP will open its doors to diploma and degree students in agricultural programmes. This is a great step forward towards our vision of an integrated post school education and training system.

UMP will continue to offer all the CHE accredited diploma programmes currently offered by the LCA at its Mbombela and Marapyane campuses, until such programmes and associated rules are amended or discontinued by the Council of UMP. All students currently enrolled at the LCA, who meet the requirements for the Diploma in Agriculture before 31 December 2014, will be awarded their Diplomas by LCA. All other students who are currently registered and who comply with the requirements of the Diploma after the 31 December 2014, will be awarded the Diploma by UMP, however their certificate will indicate that that the student receiving the Diploma was also registered at LCA before its incorporation into UMP.

The portions of land identified in the Record of Intention referred to above, which was attached to the Gazette establishing UMP, will be transferred into the ownership of UMP in accordance with Government's established land disposal processes, in terms of the provisions of section 22 (2) to (4) and (6) of the Higher Education Act, as amended. Until the processes of land transfer are concluded, UMP is authorised to take occupation of, and to develop, the land identified as if it were the owner. Other portions of land currently utilised by DARDLEA and the LCA for a variety of skills programme, specifically the Marapyane Campus, will not be transferred to UMP.

In addition, in line with the provisions of the Higher Education Act, as amended, all funds which were vested in the DARDLEA on behalf of LCA prior to 1 January 2015 by virtue of a trust, donation or bequest, will be transferred to UMP, to be used by UMP in accordance with the trust donation or bequest, as the case may be. This arrangement excludes funds allocated to DARDLEA for the annual operating expenses of these campuses.

The Seat and the main campus of UMP is in Mbombela. The Bachelor of Agriculture programme is being delivered at the main campus, which during the 2014 academic year also housed the Lowveld College of Agriculture (LCA). Here university students are sharing facilities with the Agricultural Diploma students registered with LCA. This arrangement will cease to exist in the next academic year, when the LCA is formally incorporated into the university, and all diploma students become university students.

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