

Minister Blade Nzimande: Statement on measures implemented by the National System of Innovation and Higher Education in response to Coronavirus COVID-19 epidemic

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Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation joint statement on measures implemented by the National System of Innovation and Higher Education in response to COVID-19 epidemic

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Deputy Minister Buti Manamela,

Directors-General Dr Phil Mjwara and Mr Gwebs Qonde

DDGs present

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen

Good Afternoon

I promised to continuously update South Africans on measures that we are taking in response to COVID-19 and other developments within both the Departments of Higher Education and Training, and Science and Innovation.

Today I will commence my briefing on matters of Science and Innovation. They will be followed by Higher Education and Training.

South Africa has reached a critical stage in the battle against Covid-19 and health experts and scientists have laid out a number of scenarios that can alter the trajectory of the outbreak depending on how society commits to physical distancing.

Public health experts indicate that strict physical distancing is our best chance to slow the pandemic.

Our only chance to win this fight is to slow the spread of Covid-19 and give our health sector the necessary time and resources to care for those who need it. We must unite as a country around this effort. We have no other choice.

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF INNOVATION (NSI)

The most important message that needs to go across is that we need a multi-disciplinary scientific effort to defeat the virus, combining bio-medical, psycho-social, statistical and other scientific disciplines. It is clear to us that no one single scientific discipline can defeat any pandemic. It is against this background that the initiatives outlined here must be understood.

Our National System of Innovation (NSI) identified potential research and innovation projects/activities which include Therapeutic trials for treatment, Monoclonal antibodies, immunoglobulins and molecular epidemiology as well as Vaccine development.

As a sector, we therefore adopted the theme: #Science saving lives, as an illustration of our commitment to use science to save lives. The choice we face in this crucial moment is between listening to science and saving lives or ignoring science and losing lives.

The choice we have made is to work together across our country to defeat this virus. We therefore have mobilised the entire NSI in the fight against this virus.

I have further published the necessary regulations under the Disaster Management Act, to assist our institutions in the higher education, science and innovation sectors to play their role in the fight against Covid 19.

ON SAPRIN LAUNCH OF NEW URBAN NODES TO IMPROVE COVID 19 RESPONSE

Through the South African Population Research Infrastructure Network (SAPRIN), we responded to the Covid-19 emergency by developing a surveillance protocol that was implemented within a month of the first case reported in our country.

The research involves ongoing telephonic interviews to screen for COVID symptoms in more than 60 000 rural households in Mpumalanga, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. This will greatly help in tracking the virus and focus on the demographic, social, health and socio-economic well-being of the entire study-population.

To expand to a national network and to improve its response to COVID-19 and other epidemics, SAPRIN added two new Health and Demographic Surveillance System (HDSS) nodes in Gauteng and Western Cape provinces.

ON SUPPORT TO GOVERNMENT'S TESTING DRIVE

In the beginning of the pandemic, the Department embarked on a process to repurpose some of our labs to assist in testing. This means a number of laboratories that were doing other scientific work have been supported to refocus on work in support to Covid 19. One of these for example we visited at the Tshwane University of Technology.

I am pleased that today labs such as those at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. (CSIR), Centre for Proteomic and Genomic Research (CPGR), Kwazulu-Natal Research Innovation and Sequencing Platform (KRISP) and the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) amongst others, are already conducting tests or ready to receive samples from the National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS).

The CSIR for example, is already doing tests for Eskom and Gold Fields. This is directly assisting our country' state of readiness as we work towards getting our economy back on track.

To strengthen South Africa's Active Case Finding (ACF) strategy, the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) with South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) issued a call for proposals to South African companies and researchers to develop Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) reagents and kits that can be locally manufactured to address bottlenecks in South Africa's COVID-19 testing.

This call was developed in collaboration with the National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) and the South African Health Product

Regulatory authority (SAPHRA) has developed specific guidelines for the registration of locally developed tests, reagents and test kits.

This is a unique example of multiple government departments, research councils and funding agencies working together with academia and the private sector to accelerate local innovation.

ON AFRICAN NATURAL MEDICINES RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

We are in the process of implementing multiple interventions including the use of African Medicines as immune-modulators and anti-coronavirus therapeutics.

The programme, has been working with the African Medicines Covid-19 Research Team in researching several South African herbs and formulations; with documented evidence for treatment of respiratory infections, signs and symptoms.

One of the herbs our team is working on is Artemisia afra. (Umhlonyana in Nguni languages). As the Department of Science and Innovation we have reassigned R15 million from existing Indigenous Knowledge projects to support Covid-19 interventions, and have submitted proposal for additional funding, especially for clinical studies, SMME support cultivation, agro-processing, and job creation.

The DSI is also leading a Research and Innovation Pillar of the Cannabis Industrialisation Master Plan. To this extent, our focus is to development medicinal products for Covid-19, cancers, diabetes, TB and HIV/AIDS and neurodegenerative diseases, amongst others.

Our Indigenous Knowledge-Based Bio-Innovation Programme has other five Platforms in Nutraceuticals, Cosmeceuticals, Technology Transfer (Incubation) and Commercialisation (Entrepreneurship) that includes the South African Bureau of Standards, University of Venda, University of Witwatersrand, UNISA, Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and emerging small and medium enterprises supported by these platforms.

Processes are underway at the South African Health Products Authority (SAHPRA) for establishment of dedicated structures for African medicines regulations, evaluation of African medicines clinical trials and registration of these medicines for commercial and clinical application.

As the Department of Science and Innovation, we place high value in conducting ethical and responsible research, development and innovation initiatives as we continue to build on our previous work with World Health Organization- African Regional Office (WHO-AFRO) in the development of Guidelines for Evaluation of Traditional Medicines. Our partnering healer's organisations and Indigenous Knowledge-based SMMEs are fully apprised on these processes. We are still committed to do more on this front.

On the 8th and 18th of May 2020, the Department's African Medicines Platform held a meeting with WHO-AFRO to review the role of African medicines against COVID-19 and to discuss ways in which South Africa can work with WHO-AFRO in ensuring that recognised research protocols are observed.

South Africa is the third-most biodiverse country in the world. Together with the Technology Innovation Agency and the Industrial

Development Corporation, we have created the Natural Indigenous Products Fund, under the BioProducts Advancement Network South Africa (BioPanza) initiative.

Through these initiatives we will be creating small and medium enterprises owned by Indigenous Knowledge Holders; thus, creating decent job opportunities, alleviate poverty, and empower the poor.

Our DSI's Decadal Plans envisage the establishment of an IK-Based Bio-Innovation Institute, which will be a precursor to Africa's first Plant-Based Pharmaceutical Industry.

ON BUSINESS INNOVATION SURVEY

I also wish to take this opportunity to report on and release a report on the latest Business Innovation Survey (BIS) undertaken in 2019, covering 2014-2016 period, which showed that more than two-thirds (69,9%) of South African businesses are innovation active.

I am today formally releasing this report (whose full details we are also releasing today and can be found on our website), at when businesses are being forced to become innovative in order to survive the current unusual circumstances created by Covid 19.

We therefore need to ensure people safety whilst business are operational.

I must say that I have come across some amazing innovations by South African businesses. The reason why I have appointed an industrial envoy is so that we can strengthen the relationship between government and the private sector in driving more innovation in South Africa, including increased investment by both the public and private sectors in research and development. We urge all role players to read this report on the business innovation survey.

ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Department continues to work to foster international partnerships to bolster South Africa and African ability to respond to Covid-19. Our National Research Foundation (NRF) with its partners in Canada, Sweden and the United Kingdom launched the Africa Rapid Grant Fund to support research and science capacity-building in African countries to fight Covid-19.

This put into practice the commitment made by President Ramaphosa at the recent Coronavirus Global Response international pledging event for South Africa to invest in such international partnerships.

The Department and the NRF have been successful to leverage close to R75 million in funding from international partners (Canada, Sweden and the UK) to supplement a South African investment of R15 million.

This will mean the Fund has a total budget of approximately R90 million to fund Covid-19 initiatives in South Africa and 16 other African countries.

The activities to be funded include Covid-19 research as well as capacity-building for science communication (support to journalists)

and science advice to governments in Africa.

It is envisaged that projects supported by the Fund will start no later than August 2020 to ensure a rapid response.

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN POST SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING INITIATIVES

I want to briefly report on progress given the announcements we made on planned phased return of student once we reach Alert Level 3 in the fight against Covid 19.

ON THE PHASED RETURN OF STUDENTS

Universities

Under level 3, we only allowed a maximum of 33% of the student population to be allowed to return to campuses, delivery sites and residences on condition that they can be safely accommodated and supported in line with the health and safety protocols as directed by the Department.

This cohorts of students include the following:

All groups that have already returned during alert level 4. Under level 4, we implemented measures aimed at limited and controlled return of students in their final year of study in programmes requiring clinical training, starting with medicine (MBChB) and phasing-in of all other programmes, such as Nursing, Dental, Veterinary Sciences to campuses.

In To remind ourselves we said at level 3 we will implement controlled reintegration of students back to campuses, prioritizing:

- Students in the final year of their programmes, who are on a path to graduating in 2020.**
- Final year students who require access to laboratories, technical equipment, data, connectivity and access to residence and private accommodation**
- Students in all years of study that require clinical training in their programmes (provided that the clinical training platforms have sufficient space and can accommodate them while adhering to the safety protocols).**
- Post Graduate students who require laboratory equipment and other technical equipment to undertake their studies.**

The Gazette providing the Directions on the criteria for the return to campus was published on the 8 June 2020.

As we speak all public universities have provided plans and are managing the permits for identified students to return. Private higher education institutions have also provided plans.

All our universities have provided the dates for the planned return of students in line with their risk adjusted strategy linked to the situation in their localities. All universities continue to support their other students through remote multimodal teaching, learning and assessment strategies and plans.

My department is closely monitoring the return to campuses and the implementation of the teaching and learning plans. Final year students requiring clinical training returned to their campuses over the period from 11 May to 20 June.

The planned and staggered return of the remaining 33% of students to campuses is taking place over a period from 17 June, when the first students arrived at some universities, until late August, by which time the full 33% will have been reintegrated into campuses across the country. To date 20 universities have welcomed students back onto their campuses and residences.

The following institutions have planned to reintegrate their students by the end of August 2020: SMU (from 13 July); UFH (from 13 July); MUT (from 17 July); WSU (1 August); TUT (3 August); UFS (31 August).

We are working with Universities South Africa (USAf) and HIGHER HEALTH to give support to all our institutions.

In terms of the planned return to campus, and the reworking of the 2020 Academic Year calendar, the 2020 Academic year will only be completed in the early part of 2021. This will mean a later start to the 2021 Academic Year for many students and a readjustment of the 2021 academic calendar.

I must also indicate that we have been discussing with the Department of Basic Education to determine their plans on the coming to an end of the 2020 school year. It is likely that the intake of first year university students in 2021 will be later than usual.

This will require a change in the normal academic year to ensure that the 2021 academic year finishes within the 2021 calendar year.

I also plan to publish guidelines in the Government Gazette soon to guide institutions, private accommodation providers, NSFAS and fee paying students on issues linked to tuition and accommodation fees for the 2020 Academic year, given that it will be extended, and there have been substantial changes due to the COVID-19 disaster. I will inform the public of the details in due course.

All other students remain supported through remote multimodal teaching learning and assessment until they can return to campus.

Technical and Vocational Training Colleges

For the Technical and Vocational Training Colleges, NATED Trimester (ENGINEERING) students returned as follows:

N6 & N3: 10 June

N5 & N2: 15 June

N4 & N1: 22 June

NATED Semester (BUSINESS STUDIES) students returned as follows:

N6: 25 June

N5: 29 June

N4: 06 July

We are now awaiting the return of the NC (V) students as follows:

Level 4: 13 July

Level 3: 20 July

Level 2: 27 July

Like the universities, TVETs is using HIGHER-HEALTH's health and safety protocols on the phased return of students.

Community Education and Training (CET)

Under level 3 lockdown, the CET colleges opened on 23 June 2020, the expected return rate was 133 000 students who are enrolled for the General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) ABET, Senior Certificate and Occupational programmes.

An indication that has been given by college management is that the return rate is low mainly due to anxieties or fear of exposure to COVID 19.

In addition, the return rate is affected by the closure of 312 Community Learning Centres (CLCs) out of the 1810 CLCs, due to hosting schools not complying with the regulations for operations under COVID 19.

We are expecting Colleges to submit reports on their assessment and evaluation of the state of colleges since the resumption of the academic programme on 23 of June 2020. The reports in which the actual numbers (student return rate) are reflected are to be submitted no later than 10 July 2020.

Do we have infections at the colleges?

CET Colleges have as well experienced some infections, in particular the North West, Free State, Western Cape and Gauteng CET Colleges are the worst hit by the pandemic.

Are we confident to allow students back at our institutions?

Given the challenges confronting most of the hosting schools, the CET Colleges cannot at the moment cope with the return of the full complement of students who were registered at the point of the declaration of lockdown.

It is our considered view that for the 2020 academic year serious considerations must be made that the return of students be limited to General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) ABET qualification, Senior Certificate, Occupational programmes and Adult Education and Training sub-level 3 students.

This will enable Community Learning Centres to comply with regulations especially the issue of social distancing and provision of adequate PPEs for staff and students.

ON HIGHER HEALTH

So it's imperative that as a Department , led by HIGHER HEALTH in collaboration with the Department of Health, National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD), WHO and other stakeholders, continue with programmes and innovative measures as part of our ongoing effort to support the PSET institutions' response to COVID-19.

Following my visit to the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT,) I visited the Umngungundlovu TVET College and I was highly impressed by the state of readiness of the college at the time. The college had already welcomed some students and were in the process of welcoming others in line with the TVET College phased approach.

Cleaning and Disinfection including disinfection post a COVID19 Positive case is confirmed on most campuses, guided by protocols also developed by Higher Health, which I have already released.

These Protocols, Guidelines and Trainings have helped our sector towards a smooth phased approach of opening, to prevent infections, build systems for screening, testing, quarantining and linkage to medical care, and address mental health problems and substance abuse exacerbated by this pandemic. We regularly update and align these guidelines and algorithms according to NICD, WHO and Health Department instructions.

The number of infections across South Africa and especially in certain Districts and Metros has climbed quickly in the last couple of weeks. The gradual reopening of the PSET institutions takes place within this context.

Our institutions have implemented and continue to follow extensive measures to reduce the risk of exposure within their facilities through developing strong controls. Protocols and systems with HIGHER HEALTH across our campus sites.

Higher Health has also developed a purpose-built daily digital screening and monitoring tool that enables all PSET students and staff to check for COVID-19 risks and symptoms every day.

For those who cannot screen through HealthCheck, screening stations have been developed at every campus level close to entrances, using paperless, digital platform towards assisting in screening of the needful.

Since the HealthCheck was launched about 20 days ago, we have recorded over 600 000 screenings done across the post school education and training (PSET) system, with students and staff using the HealthCheck either through WhatsApp, USSD or the website.

From this data this far the overwhelming majority fall into the "low risk" category (about 95%). The 5% that fell within the moderate to high risk as per the NICD/NDOH algorithm, were immediately placed in self isolation, further assisting towards limiting the spread of the infection and helping towards the phased smooth opening of our sector. Age-wise, about 80% fall into the largest age bracket (18-40 years), followed by a fifth that are between 40 and 65.

Both private Higher Education and Skill Based learning Centres have been equally prioritised in line with trainings and protocols for their planning towards smooth opening of their campuses.

ZERO RATING OF EDUCATION WEBSITES AND DATA BUNDLES

I want to emphasise, multi-modal teaching, learning and assessment is not an option for universities and TVET colleges any more, it is a necessity.

Everyone in the PSET, from universities, TVET and CET colleges to skills development programmes and work-integrated learning are embarking on modes of educational delivery that embrace the principles of open learning, as outlined in current PSET policies.

We have started with some initiatives like laptops and data to students, the development of high quality connectivity for all universities, and TVET Colleges in collaboration with the DSI and SANREN and other initiatives.

The CSIR is continuing and has briefed me on its work on geo-spatial mapping to try and assist with the location of University and TEVT student homes in relation to areas of connectivity in our country.

We are encouraging all of our institutions in common localities and working in the same areas have to work with each other, with public and private enterprises, with social structures, with the communities they serve, and with local, district and provincial government to create articulated, seamless, responsive education and development opportunities.

We have to think about sharing learning and teaching materials and support the open educational resource (OER) movement, we have to share infrastructure, expertise and systems.

I want to thank the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies and the Electronic Network Providers, including the Mobile Network Operators that have already zero-rated educational content sites of our public universities, TVET, CET, Agricultural and Nursing Colleges.

We stand currently on 96% / 592 of educational sites that are zero-rated and the two Departments are working effortlessly to get all sites that adheres to the criteria as published in the Government Gazette of 5 June 2020.

Most universities have already negotiated free data bundles with the MNOs to pay for additional content that is not covered through the zero-rating. We have negotiated with all mobile network operators' very favourable rates for our NSFAS and Funza Lushaka students for 10GB daytime and 20GB night-time data for 3 months.

I have received very positive reports from institutions on the take up and application of these bundles. However I urge MNOs to fast-track these bundles to students.

I am also unhappy by the reports that I got where students are using the data bundles for private use such as downloading movies, and even more disturbing, undesirable content. I just want to emphasize, this data must be used for dedicated online educational platforms for teaching and learning as approved by our institutions.

We have also made free digital content available to specifically our TVET College students through our DHET website, the National Open Learning System (NOLS) of the Department, institutional websites and other sites, where students can find digital materials to access to assist them in their learning and preparation for the exams.

ON GADGETS

On the 30th April 2020, I announced that NSFAS funded students will be provided with digital devices to support their learning in 2020 during the COVID 19 lockdown and when they return to campuses.

This programme will continue into the future as the devices will become an essential part of student empowerment and capacitation going forward. Students will own the devices outright and it is contemplated that their learning experience will be enhanced through access to learning material beyond the classroom.

The acquisition of digital devices, with the requisite software and data, for university students is already accommodated for in the NSFAS learning material allowances.

Several universities have already channeled these funds towards procurement and access to digital devices with NSFAS assisting with cashflow where required. Over 65% of universities are in different stages (commenced or completed) of the procurement processes for the devices.

Many students at these universities have already received their digital devices, while some are awaiting delivery.

I am happy to announce that I have signed a once off policy deviation for the allocation of a learning material allowance to TVET Colleges students for 2020 academic year. I have made this arrangement because funding for TVET College students does not make provision for a learning material allowance, but all TVET students, including those funded by NSFAS, receive learning material as part of their tuition cost.

The tender for digital devices for NSFAS beneficiaries for issuance in 2020 was advertised on 26 June 2020, with the closing date being 13 July 2020. It is anticipated that tender award and contracting will be completed by 15 August 2020.

To stimulate growth and empower the local economy, the tender provides that only BBB-EE level 1 and 2 contributors are eligible to bid for the tender. In addition, the bidder must sub-contract at least 30% of the contract to an SMME which is at least 51% black owned.

In addition to the tender requirements and to support local manufacturing and production, all laptop bags must be 100% locally manufactured/produced.

A memorandum of agreement (MOA) between all academic institutions and NSFAS will be signed for concurrence on terms and conditions for the transfer of funds for the procurement process.

Subsequent to the signing of the MOA, a list of all NSFAS funded students that require digital devices should be provided by the academic institution to NSFAS for verification and vetting.

ON NSFAS COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

I am pleased to announce that I have appointed a Ministerial Committee of Inquiry into the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to conduct an independent investigation into the business processes, systems and capacity of NSFAS.

The Committee is set to make recommendations for a future model of administering student financial aid.

Professor Yunus Ballim, former Vice Chancellor of Sol Plaatjie University (SPU) and Professor of Civil Engineering at Wits University, has been appointed to chair the Inquiry. The other members of the Committee are Mr Khaya Matiso, Professor Pamela Dube, Ms Nomzamo Maziya, and Mr Baxolile Mabinya.

The Committee is expected to complete its work within six months. The detailed Terms of Reference for the Inquiry are included in Government Gazette No. 43345, dated 21 May 2020.

I also would like to correct any confusion about the role of the Committee of Inquiry in relation to the NSFAS Administration.

The NSFAS Administration comes to an end in August 2020, and the Administrator continues to be in office until that time. The Inquiry is independent of NSFAS and has no role in terms of its current administration.

I thank the members of this important inquiry team for their willingness to take on this critical work on the Ministerial task team report on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics

In 2015 I convened the second Higher Education Summit on Transformation. The summit highlighted national concerns on the slow rate of transformation, and in its concluding Statement, directed that "The sector should build on the nationally coordinated programme to enable accelerated capacity development, greater representation and improved retention of blacks and women in the academic workforce, professoriate and university management and governance structures."

I specifically appointed the Ministerial Task Team on the Recruitment, Retention and Progression of Black South African Academics under the chairpersonship of Professor David Mosoma to investigate this issue more deeply, to identify the blockages underpinning the slow pace of academic staff transformation at universities and to make recommendations on how these can be addressed.

I am pleased to announce that the Task Team concluded its work and submitted its report, and I am releasing the report to the public today and it is available on the Department of Higher Education and Training website.

The blockages that the MTT identified can be grouped into five broad categories:

- Firstly, postgraduate pipeline impediments in which the South African postgraduate pipeline is woefully inadequate to support the aspirations of a developing and transformed South Africa. It is inadequate in size and continues to be inequitable in terms of participation and success of South African black and female students.**

What is extremely worrying is that while overall postgraduate numbers are growing, the proportional share of South African postgraduate students is steadily declining.

If the postgraduate pipeline challenges are not decisively addressed, it will become very difficult to address the staff

recruitment challenge.

- **Secondly, staff participation and progression impediments; despite some gains, black academics, specifically African and coloured academics, and female academics remain under-represented in the academy.**

Under-representation is more pronounced at senior levels, and is more pronounced at specific universities, typically the historically advantaged universities and especially at the previously Afrikaans institutions.

It appears that some universities may be seeking to address staff transformation imperatives through the recruitment of black academics from the continent.

The progression impediments are multiple, with factors relating to research participation highlighted as particularly important.

- **Thirdly, Institutional cultures that work in overtly and covertly racist and sexist ways to maintain the postgraduate student profile and/or the staffing status quo in certain spaces, competing academic responsibilities, the lack of appropriate role models and mentors, and inability to embark on a research trajectory are significant barriers that work against the recruitment, retention and progression of black and women academics.**

- **Fourthly, the Task Team highlighted the existence of policy and strategy impediments. In regard to staff transformation at universities, a policy-strategy disjuncture appears to exist in some spaces.**

Whilst universities are implementing a number of strategies to transform the staff profile, these appear to be executed in the absence of clear, well-defined policy, and in the absence of time-bound staff transformation plans that seek to achieve specific targets.

- **Finally, resource impediments continue to impact on the pace at which the postgraduate pipeline and the staffing pipeline can be transformed. The task Team noted the raft of instruments that the NRF and the DHET were implementing to support staff capacity development and transformation at universities.**

The Task Team has made 20 recommendations to address the blockages in the 5 areas highlighted by the team, and the report lists and elaborates on these recommendations.

In releasing this report today, I am requesting that the sector engages seriously with the report, and with its recommendations, with a view to identifying concrete actions that can be implemented at multiple levels of the system to give effect to the recommendations. I look forward to receiving proposals for action.

It is my intention that, after a period of two months during which the sector must propose concrete action on the recommendations, I will submit the report, its recommendations, and the actions to Cabinet for its consideration and approval.

ON THE MINISTERIAL TASK TEAM (MTT) TO ADVISE THE MINISTER ON MATTERS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARM IN UNIVERSITIES

In 2019, a Ministerial Task Team to advise the Minister on matters of sexual harassment and gender-based violence and harm in

South African universities, was appointed by my predecessor, Minister Naledi Pandor. Professor Sibongile Muthwa, the Vice Chancellor of Nelson Mandela University was the Chair of the Task Team.

The Ministerial Task Team commenced its work on in July 2019, and I am pleased to announce that its recommendations have now been processed into a framework for dealing with gender based violence and now approved by Cabinet.

I now expect all our post school institutions to mainstream this framework into implementable actions in each of our institutions. This is indeed a very important step towards effectively dealing with the scourge of GBV.

ON REMUNERATION OF VICE CHANCELLORS

Following a request from the Portfolio Committee of Higher Education, Science and Innovation to conduct research on the salaries of vice chancellors and senior executives at public universities, I requested the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to commission an inquiry on the matter in accordance with Section 5 (a) of the CHE Act.

The research will assess and/or provide advice on the annual data on the remuneration of Vice-Chancellors and senior executive managers, and annual salary increases for 2005. Amongst others, the comparison of salaries of Vice-Chancellors and senior executive managers to those of academics and the rest of non-academic staff and workers for the period covering 2005 will also be conducted.

The CHE set up a Task Team whose work will run for 11 months, with the following deliverables:

- 1. A report presenting the research work undertaken and the findings to be completed by 31 March 2021.**
- 2. An advisory submission on the feasibility of institutionalising a system-wide policy on regulating remunerations of university executives, and the implications of such a measure on the principle of institutional autonomy within the context of public accountability for the resources dispensed to universities by the state, to be produced shortly after 31 March 2021.**

I thank you

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