

PROJECTING THE NUMBER OF NEW ACADEMICS THAT NEED TO BE RECRUITED IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS (2014 -2019)

- The expansion of access envisaged in both the National Development Plan (National Planning Commission, 2011) and the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) carries with it the need to increase the number of academics to at least maintain the current ratio between staff and students. However, the sector is losing academics to retirement, death, emigration and moves into other employment faster than they are being replaced, and the real numbers required by both growth and replacement are far from being realised.

- The number of academics needed in any future year e.g. 2019, is calculated by determining the number of additional academics that will be needed to cater for planned system growth; the number of additional academics that will be needed to enhance system efficiency e.g. through improved staff: student ratios; and the number of additional academics that will be needed to replace those lost through attrition (retirement, resignation and death) from a baseline year to the target year.

- The 2014-2019 enrolment planning process that the DHET has recently concluded with universities has set targets for a greater number of enrolments as well as for a slightly improved staff-student ratio, as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Planned full time equivalent student and staff numbers (source: National Enrolment Plans submitted to DHET by public universities)

	Planned Targets					
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Student numbers	665313	679871	694263	709833	724722	737343
Staff numbers	23794	24547	25282	26056	26800	27477
Staff: student ratio	1:28	1:27.7	1:27.5	1:27.2	1:27.0	1:26.8

- The table shows the targeted growth in FTE student enrolments from 665 313 to 737 343 over the next five years, and a growth in FTE staff numbers from 23 794 to 27 477, which implies a projected reduction in the average staff: student ratio from 1:28 to 1:26.8 by 2019.

- Accommodating the new growth, along with an improved staff: student ratio, will require the recruitment of 3 683 (27 477 – 23 794) additional academics into newly created posts by 2019. This works out to an average of 737 per year. It is estimated that the university system has been employing about 233 (fulltime equivalent) academics into newly-established posts each year between 2000 and 2012. It is therefore important to note that the SSAUF is not intended to replace other, more traditional ways of recruiting staff, but is put forward as an additional, focused, purposive and ongoing attempt to ensure renewal and transformation of the academic work force. Individual university efforts to recruit staff must continue, and be strengthened where this is possible.
- The number indicated above (3 683) is an indication of the need resulting from system expansion and improved efficiency. It does not include the need that is generated as a result of normal attrition through retirement, resignations and death.
- It is very difficult to determine precise statistics on the attrition rate of academics at South African universities, as the DHET has been unable to track this through the HEMIS. This is as a result of the inability of universities to provide the identity numbers of staff, which is the only way that such tracking can happen, due to the requirements of the Protection of Private Information Act. This further complicates supply-demand planning, and discussions are taking place about ways to overcome this challenge. There are also very limited studies that explore academic staff retention and attrition. There are multiple factors that impact on staff attrition and the issue of academic staff attrition and retention needs to be researched much more extensively in and by South African universities.
- Some data exist on age cohorts of academic staff in South African universities, and these can be used to show what future retirement trends might be, as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Headcounts of instruction/research professionals with permanent appointments at South African universities, according to age (HEMIS audited data, 2012)

	Professor / Associate Professor	Director/ Associate Director	Senior Lecturer	Lecturer	Junior Lecturer	Below Junior Lecturer	Undesigned	Total
Under 25 years	0	0	2	43	64	5	7	121
25-34 year	72	0	656	1,998	432	56	92	3,306
35-44 years	766	31	1,504	2,598	246	44	99	5,288
45-54 years	1542	67	1,419	1,906	107	22	72	5,135
55-59 years	960	43	592	580	23	10	34	2,242
60-62 years	427	25	230	151	12	1	19	865
63-65 years	242	12	112	67	4	1	8	446
66-69 years	19	0	4	9	1	0	0	33
70 years and over	6	1	2	6	0	0	0	15

- Universities have different policies in place regarding retirement age. Age 60 is the retirement age at some universities, whilst others have 65 as the retirement age. Some universities allow highly productive staff to continue beyond age 65, albeit almost always on part-time or carefully defined conditions. It is therefore difficult to predict accurately how many of the staff in the table above will actually retire in a given time.
- It can reasonably be expected that all the staff aged 60 and above in the table will reach retirement age and/or retire in the next five years, and so will need to be replaced (1359).
- It is estimated that 50% (1 121) of the staff in the 55 -59 years age bracket will retire by 2020.

- Therefore, the number of new academics that will be needed to cater for growth in the system, For improved staff: student ratios, and to replace staff that retire, amounts to 6 163 ($3683 + 1\,359 + 1\,121$).
- Over a five year period, 1 232 new academics need to be recruited each year ($6163 / 5$). It should be borne in mind that this is a conservative estimate, which has not been able to take into account the attrition caused by resignations and by death.
- Decisions about the scale of implementation of the programmes making up the SSAUF can therefore be guided by the numerical challenge outlined above, as well as by the availability of resources.