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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 346**

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**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 07 OF 2019**

**Dr W J Boshoff (FF Plus) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology:**

(1) Whether his department has any plans in place to retain the services and skills of academics, including academics who have reached retirement age, for the benefit of the Republic in general and for their specialist academic fields in particular; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(2) whether he will make a statement on the matter?

**NW1317E**

**REPLY:**

1. The appointment and retention of personnel at universities is the responsibility of each institution.

The majority of universities have a normal retirement age of 65. Most of these also allow post retirement employment for a further 3 years (some contract, and some deferred retirement) in selected cases where the expertise is required and under specific conditions. This post retirement employment is specifically allowed to enable the retention of scarce and critical skills.

However, retaining critical and scarce skills post-retirement age is not a long-term sustainable solution, and efforts have to be made to strengthen the academic staff pipeline to ensure that there are academics who can competently replace those who retire.

The Department of Higher Education and Training is implementing the Staffing South Africa’s Universities’ Framework (SSAUF) as part of its comprehensive University Capacity Development Programme. The SSAUF is intended to support universities to recruit, develop and retain academic staff. A number of key programmes are being implemented:

* The New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) supports universities to appoint and develop new academics in areas of need, including in critical and scarce skills areas. 473 Posts have already been allocated, and going forward, 100 new posts will be allocated every year.
* The University Staff Doctoral Programme (USD) supports existing academics to achieve doctoral degrees so that they can progress more rapidly along the research and teaching career trajectory. The programme was initiated in 2018, and approximately 200 academics are currently being supported, with a further 60 to be recruited this year.
* The Future Professors Programme supports promising academics who have shown academic and research leadership potential to participate in a two-year development programme that will enable them to apply for professor positions. The first phase of the programme will recruit three cohorts of 28 academics over three years, with the first cohort being recruited in 2019.
* The Supplementary Staff Programme enables the recruitment of skilled retired academics to support the implementation of the other SSAUF programmes and other staff development initiatives. These skilled academics are utilised for example, as mentors, or to replace nGAP and USDP scholars when they undertake mobility opportunities away from the university as part of their development programmes.

The Department intends upscaling these programmes as funding becomes available.

1. The Minister has already communicated to the sector on the need to retain critical and scarce skills whilst new capacity is being developed.

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