



higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**Towards New Universities in
Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape**

Annexure 01
Selection Criteria for Towns and Sites

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1. Strategic Context

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.

Since 2006 Government has invested more than R6.8b in the upgrading and expansion of infrastructure across South Africa's 23 existing universities. This year the Department of Higher Education (DHET) is allocating a further R3.8b for infrastructure expansion during 2012 and 2013. While enrolments have grown from 603 000 in 2001 to 900 000 in 2011, capacity remains inadequate to accommodate the rising number of qualifying school leavers. There remains a growing urgency for additional capacity.

Against this background Government has decided to develop two new institutions of higher learning in the provinces of Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape, the only two provinces that do not yet have a University. A number of factors have an important bearing on the choice of the seats of the two universities.

From a macro perspective, these will be the first new institutions of higher learning in a post democratic South Africa. This imposes a particular onus on Government to ensure that they are role models, reflecting the values and ideals of the new South Africa. They must be of a world class caliber, both academically and physically. They must be inspirational and an enduring source of pride, both nationally and provincially.

At a countrywide level, the new institutions must advance the national goals for higher education, particularly

- enrolment growth and increased participation in absolute numbers and in proportion to the population demographics of the country;
- growth in teaching and academic capacity in order to support sustained national development.

At a regional and local level the new institutions must:

- create a strong academic hub in each province, characterized by strong main campuses that promote a regional focus on higher education
- enable maximum access within the country, the province and, indeed, internationally;
- contribute to the economic growth and cultural development of the respective provinces;
- draw on the individuality and strengths of each province to develop a unique academic focus.

2. Criteria for the Selection of Towns

It is a given that in each of the two provinces almost any town would benefit from the establishment of a new university and certainly many could make a convincing case for the economic boost associated with a development of this nature. However, while the new university will undoubtedly contribute to the development of the province as a whole, the criteria for selection of “the seat of delivery” must be based on the ability of the selected town to ensure the success of the new university, now and into the future.

The town must provide an appropriate supporting fabric and environment for the university, including existing bulk infrastructure. It must be accessible to the largest possible population, provincially and nationally. It must have attractive social, cultural and recreational amenities and be able to attract top academics. It must be economically and commercially vibrant and have growth potential. The prestige and viability of the new institution would be enhanced by a town that is host to important government institutions, research institutes and other public entities.

2.1. The Inspirational and Iconic Role of the New Universities

The highest order institutions demand the most important locations within our spatial fabric. In this context, institutions of national importance should be located within towns and on sites that already demonstrate a substantial strength of place.

The inspirational role of the new university should speak to as broad a public as possible, be placed on equal footing with other national institutions and public service structures and facilities. The prominence of the town is an important characteristic that will strengthen the inspirational aspect of the institution.

Summary criteria:

In the above context, important factors would be:

- a. The unique character of town and region, strength of place and inspirational role,
- b. The quality of the town and surrounds, the urban and natural environment;

2.2. Accessibility and Connectivity

Building on the inspirational character of the universities, the host towns must enjoy the greatest level of integration at national, regional and local level. This implies that the town should be a regional hub with the greatest level of access by road, rail and air and that the selected town is the focus of national and regional infrastructure development plans.

There is an obligation to ensure that the new universities are located and structured around the established infrastructure that provides accessibility and connectivity for students, staff, researchers and visiting academics and dignitaries. The potential for linkage and proximity to academic facilities, research institutes and higher education establishments would support the early development of the universities.

Summary criteria:

In this context, important factors would be:

- a. The level of integration to national and regional road, rail and air infrastructure
- b. The level of integration with current and future national and regional development corridors.
- c. The level of accessibility for all students and staff, visiting lecturers and researchers, officials and guests.
- d. The capacity of existing infrastructure (water, sewerage, power and data connectivity)

- e. The proximity to regional and local health, justice and civic services are also of primary consideration.
- f. Links to other academic and research institutions in close proximity
- g. Links to existing higher education facilities
- h. Links to private sector initiatives

2.3. Quality of Support Structures for Staff and Students

A world class university must be able to attract and retain top notch academics and staff. To attract and retain the necessary human resources requires a high quality environment in terms of both the campus and the host town. The host town should provide a hub of economic activity and be of sufficient size and diversity to attract and retain quality staff and students.

The host towns will play an important role in contributing to long-term sustainability of the planned universities. The quality of public amenities, educational spread, recreational amenities, quality of housing and student job opportunities contribute an essential element to the success of the planned university. The ability of the town to contribute to student life, (including part time work opportunities) and the ability of the future selected site to integrate with the surrounding town are critical considerations.

Summary criteria:

In respect to the quality of the town, important criteria would be:

- a. Ability of town to accommodate students and absorb a percentage of the accommodation requirements
- b. Ability of the towns to:
 - offer and support an enriching student life environment.
 - ensure long term retention of students and staff,
 - offer student job opportunities and internships.
- c. Availability of existing industry and commercial activity in support of university activity.
- d. Availability of various levels of schooling for families of staff
- e. Access to attractive social, cultural and recreational amenities
- f. Availability of sport facilities, parks and natural amenities
- g. Availability of public services – health, police and retail amenities.

3. Criteria for the Selection of Sites

Within the preferred town, the selected site must be well located. It must provide an iconic setting for the university with strong visibility and a commanding presence. It should be of suitable size and shape for current plans, as well as future expansion over many decades. It should be able to be quickly and cost effectively serviced and should be unencumbered by complex environmental, land, legal or geotechnical constraints.

3.1. Good Site Accessibility

The site should be well located to be easily accessible from major development corridors within the province. Site accessibility also embraces the availability and capacity of bulk infrastructure.

An important factor for an institution of higher education is the level of integration within the host town or city and to the surrounding community. Close proximity to retail outlets and to sport and recreation are particularly important factors in the selection of the site, as is the proximity to cultural and social activity.

The opportunities for linkage with surrounding academic facilities, research institutes and higher education establishments are important to support the beginnings of the universities.

Summary criteria:

In this context, important factors would be:

- a. Level of accessibility for all students and staff.
- b. Capacity and availability of major road access, water, waste, power and internet connectivity
- c. Level of integration within the town or city civic structure
- d. Link and integration with the broader community.
- e. Public transport opportunities
- f. Links to other academic and research institutions
- g. Links to private sector initiatives

3.2. Iconic Setting

Required is a setting of commanding distinction and high visibility that will accentuate the stature, dignity and pride of place accorded to the first universities to be built since the advent of South Africa's democracy. Ideally the site should be well located in relation to government and civic functions, including education facilities and research institutes.

Notwithstanding the potential and possible desirability for future satellite campuses (which may be dispersed within the province), it is important that the seat of each new university is large enough to achieve a sense of presence and identity.

For the new institution to achieve iconic stature and a long-term legacy, the selected site should enable the universities to establish a consolidated independent spatial character, either as a defined campus or within an identifiable area within the town.

Summary criteria:

In this context, important factors would be:

- a. Visibility of the site, providing a commanding presence, preferably overlooking the city, or strategically embedded within its civic structure
- b. A prominent location in relation to other civic functions.

3.3. Size and Nature of the Sites

The sites must be of sufficient size and nature to facilitate the development of the university including an allowance for growth over a 100-year timeframe.

The universities have very real and specific spatial requirements, which demand very specific land requirements and expansion opportunities. The size of university is dependent on the academic programme, the residential need (percentage on campus or in town), and sport and recreation amenities.

The two universities have different space requirements. The Mpumalanga University is aiming for a 15 000 strong student body in the medium term. Experience demonstrates the need for a long-term expansion potential of possibly up to 40 000 students. Spatial studies are currently underway to give a firm indication of what land size would be required. Initial indicators point to a site size of between 80 and 120 hectares.

The land requirement in Northern Cape is less demanding, with a medium term target of 4 500 students with expansion over the long term to a possible 10 000 students. The relatively small size of the proposed institution makes it more dependent on its setting and surroundings in order to establish a sense of place and identity.

In assessing the size of the site, it is also important to consider a number of related factors that will impact on the layout and development of the site. These include the topography, orientation and geology. The site should be situated in proximity to complimentary land use zones in order to avoid conflicts of activities with neighbours.

Summary criteria:

In this context, important related criteria are:

- a. Size of land parcels available
- b. Size of developable land (partly dependent on slope, geotechnical and environmental considerations, etc)
- c. Growth and expansion potential, including surrounding land availability
- d. Current active use of site.
- e. Orientation of the site
- f. Topography: Slope and steepness of site.
- g. Visibility and views
- h. Access to the proposed site
- i. Environmental considerations and sensitivity of the ecosystem, including constraints such as flood lines
- j. Geology and soil conditions
- k. Possible constraints in terms of land claims, environmental considerations and sensitivity of the ecosystem, heritage considerations, etc

3.4. Cost and Time Efficiencies

Time for development and cost of development are critical factors in the selection of the sites.

The two universities need to be established as soon as possible. The demand for higher education is driving the time frames, and this has serious implications on site selection. A variety of constraints have been identified, that might delay land availability and development. Aspects that require consideration are:

- The levels of township establishment, environmental investigations and possible heritage approvals that can have a considerable impact on programme implementation.

- Land availability and land ownership also would impact on time before implementation, which makes the location of the universities on DHET or Government owned land more desirable.
- The existing provision of sufficient bulk infrastructure to the site (road access, storm water, sewers, electricity, IT network, telephone etc), will considerably reduce the development time and cost.

The cost of establishment of the two universities is an important consideration, which is influenced by a variety of informants. The immediate land acquisition and development costs need to be carefully assessed against the long-term capacity of the university to sustain its academic, environmental, economic, and social responsibilities.

Ideally, the selected sites should be owned by government or be donated to government for development of the university, in order to reduce both the time and cost of development.

Ideally also, the selected sites should have available sufficient bulk infrastructure (i.e. water supply, power supply, major connector and access roads, sewage disposal and internet connectivity), to support the new university, in order to reduce both the cost and time required for development of the university.

Summary criteria:

In the context of time and cost considerations, important criteria are:

- a. Government-owned properties
- b. Time frames for transfer of land to the DHET for development
- c. Land availability and land cost
- d. Time and cost related to site establishment in terms of Town Planning Regulatory aspects.
- e. Availability of bulk infrastructure, establishment cost and time
- f. Land use rights and approved land uses
- g. Possible land claims
- h. Construction cost in relation to site conditions (slope, geology, etc)
- i. Access to materials and craftsmanship for construction.