



higher education & training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Minutes of the nGAP Lecturers Induction nGAP Mentors & Managers Workshops

14-15 OCT
2024



NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY

DAY 1: 14 OCTOBER 2024
09:00-16:00
nGAP Lecturers Induction Workshop

1. Opening, introduction and welcome
09:00 – 09:10

- 1.1 Dr Phumeza Kota-Nyati, the Nelson Mandela University’s Dean for Learning and Teaching welcomed all the guests in attendance, including nGAP mentors, and managers. She acknowledged all the institutions represented in the nGAP programme.
- 1.2 Dr Kota-Nyati noted that Nelson Mandela University is the implementation partner of the nGAP programme, responsible for its administration and coordination.
- 1.3 The nGAP Lecturers Induction as highlighted was a milestone of growth, development, and transformation in the higher education sector. This milestone was celebrated as a significant achievement in academia, particularly for individuals with doctoral qualifications. Dr Kota-Nyati remarked that many members from previous cohorts had published no fewer than five articles, supervised honours and master’s students, drafted funding proposals, and collaborated with international and regional academics.
- 1.4 Dr Kota-Nyati extended her congratulations all the nGAP lecturers.
- 1.5 Recognising Mental Health Month, Dr Kota-Nyati reflected on the difficulty of embarking on a PhD journey that can lead to all kinds of decision which often involve a range of decisions and mixed emotions. She acknowledged that while each journey is unique, it is one that requires compassion and community. She emphasized that nGAP lecturers should strive to build supportive networks that platforms like these workshops provide an opportunity to expand their connections. “The journey,” she remarked, “is easier when we walk it with others.”
- 1.6 In isiXhosa, she reiterated, “khululani ibhatyi” which directly translates to take off your jacket, but this expression served as an official welcome, encouraging guests to feel at home. She warmly welcomed everyone to Gqeberha and to Nelson Mandela University.

Key points:

- Build supportive networks among nGAP lecturers to foster collaboration and ease the academic journey.
- Create safe spaces in workshops for candid sharing and constructive engagement.

2. Purpose of the workshop

09:10 – 09:20

1.1 Mr Calvin Pennells from the DHET, thanked all those in attendance and noted the purpose of the workshop in two-fold:

- Day 1: nGAP Lecturers Induction Workshop
- Day 2: Mentors and Managers Workshop

The first day focused on nGAP lecturer experiences, challenges, and lessons learnt. The second day of the workshop focused on the establishment of the mentor committee.

1.2 In his presentation, Mr. Pennells highlighted the objectives of the workshop as follows:

The two-day workshop objectives were:

- To equip all parties involved in the nGAP with the necessary information for the participants, including mentors, and managers.
- To contextualise the nGAP within the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP) and Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUF).
- To clarify expectations of the nGAP; to resolve the understanding the role of related parties such as scholars, mentors, supervisors, and managers.
- To share unique challenges and lessons learnt, experiences and challenges all parties have experienced.
- To share information on funding opportunities for further study.
- To create networking opportunities and create a platform for managers and mentors to meet.

1.3 In conclusion, Mr. Pennells referenced paragraph 35 of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), highlighting that “nGAP is positioned as a prestigious program for candidates who have demonstrated high academic ability and a passion for a career in academia.” He emphasized that this gathering celebrated such distinguished individuals and marked a significant step in their journey toward becoming academics. He also encouraged the nGAP lecturers not to be scared or intimidated to ask for help and collaboration on their own projects.

Key points:

- Encourage institutions to embed the nGAP programme in their frameworks, ensuring independence from DHET.
- Align stakeholder roles and objectives to enhance programme effectiveness and understanding.

3. Presentation on the implementation of SSAUF and nGAP 09:20 – 09:40

- 3.1 Ms Silindile Shabalala, the Deputy Director of the University Capacity Development at DHET presented on behalf of Ms Mandisa Cakwe, the Director of the University Capacity Development Directorate and noted that Ms. Cakwe will join the meeting after lunch.
- 3.2 Ms Shabalala presented an overview of the DHET's approach to programme implementation, explaining that DHET's programmes were based on the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training. This policy framework defined DHET's priorities for developing and strengthening South Africa's post-school education and training (PSET) system.
- 3.3 She noted that, building on the White Paper's vision, the National Plan for Post-School Education and Training (NPPSET) was developed to effectively implement these priorities. Together, the White Paper and the National Plan provided a roadmap for creating a cohesive and effective PSET system.
- 3.4 Ms Shabalala outlined the main challenges that the National Plan for PSET intended to address:
- Quality remained inadequate in many areas of the system, which was reflected in high repetition and dropout rates.
 - There were weak linkages between institutions and the workplace, with limited employer involvement in training.
 - Systems, including data systems, were weak and poorly integrated.
 - Quality assurance was lacking in many parts of the system.
- 3.5 Ms Shabalala explained that prior to 2018, there were two grants: the Research and Development Grant (RDG) and the Teaching Development Grant (TDG). In 2018, these two grants were merged into a single grant known as the University Capacity Development Grant (UCDG). This grant funded all programmes under the University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP), an initiative focused on advancing the transformation agenda in university education across three critical areas: student development, staff development, and programme/curriculum development.
- 3.6 Ms Shabalala added that the UCDP viewed transformation as both addressing persistent inequalities in higher education and building quality to enhance access and success. The UCDP served as an umbrella for various training and development initiatives, including the Staffing South Africa's Universities Framework (SSAUF) and nGAP. The UCDP's funding sources included university contributions, other government grants, the UCDG, DHET funding mechanisms, and international partnerships, including collaborations with civil society.

- 3.7 Ms Shabalala provided a summary of the SSAUF, describing it as a strategic framework aimed at transforming the academic workforce within South Africa's universities. She stated that SSAUF focused on building a diverse, skilled, and representative academic staff by recruiting, developing, and retaining new academics, particularly those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds. Through structured support programmes such as nGAP, SSAUF promoted mentorship, career development, and capacity building to address academic staffing shortages and ensure universities reflected the demographic diversity and expertise required for a globally competitive higher education system.
- 3.8 Programmes implemented under SSAUF include the Nurturing Emerging Scholars Programme (NESP); nGAP; Existing Staff Capacity Enhancement Programme (ESCEP) which consists of two sub-programmes: University Staff Doctoral Programme (USDP) and the Future Professors Programme (FPP).
- 3.9 Ms Shabalala then discussed the nGAP, a key programme within SSAUF. She explained that nGAP involved recruiting new academics through a structured 4- or 6-year development programme, designed to support universities in hiring academics for permanent positions that aligned with their staffing and development plans. nGAP beneficiaries were appointed based on the staffing development needs of the university, with positions applied for by universities through DHET.
- 3.10 This is a transformative programme and therefore requires that 80% of the appointees in the university must be Black (African, Coloured and Indian men and women including people with disabilities), of which at least 55% of the positions should be taken up by women.
- 3.11 On appointment of nGAP lecturers, Ms. Shabalala emphasised that employment of nGAP lecturers is permanent from the onset, and it would be against the SOPs if the nGAP candidate is not employed on a permanent basis.
- 3.12 One of the contentious challenges noted are those candidates who prematurely exit the programme. She highlighted that a premature exit warrants some liability, maximum of such liability is R350 000.00. Furthermore, the change of the institution (university) also warrants the change of the employer contract, therefore, the potential of incurring a liability. Therefore, it is important that nGAP lecturers spend the entire duration of the programme with the appointing university as resigning/leaving the programme by choice or having their contracts terminated for reasons of poor performance or misconduct will result in the lecturer being requested to repay the university costs incurred.
- 3.13 Ms Shabalala presented and explained the nGAP programme duration for the master's degree holders. The programme is subdivided into three categories:
- Stage 1 - Development Programme: is a three-year duration with a 20% reduced workload because there is a requirement to pursue the PhD.

- Stage 2 – Induction and early career development: has an increased workload of 50% in the fourth year and a full workload in subsequent years.
 - Stage 3 – Remain at the university: post the completion of the PhD, there is a ploughing back at the university that was responsible for the training and development of the nGAP lecturer.
- 3.14 Additionally, the nGAP programme for candidates that are PhD holders was presented as a 6-year programme subdivided into two stages:
- Stage 1 – Induction and early career development: the reduced workload is 50% for the first two years. From the third year, the nGAP lecturer is assumed to take up the full workload.
 - Stage 2 – Remain at the university: the last two years of the programme (year 5 and 6) are regarded as ploughing back into the institution.
- 3.15 Regarding the salary composition of the nGAP lecturer, from the perspective of the DHET. For every post, there is a ringfenced amount that is granted to the universities. The first three years, 54% ought to be allocated towards the nGAP’s lecturer’s salary. The allocation decreases with every year that the lecturer is embedded in the system.
- 3.16 Ms Shabalala reflected that there have been requests to reallocate some funds. Though some reallocation is permitted, the salary component and the SSAU-DP component cannot be reallocated.
- 3.17 The international conference/mobility allowance increased from 1% to 2%. Ms Shabalala noted that participants are still dissatisfied with the allowance but emphasised that this is the cost allocation that the DHET can currently afford. She added that there is a Directorate that is responsible for international scholarships and mentioned that applying for scholarships will not necessarily be double-dipping. The scholarships could assist in complimenting the international conference/mobility allocation.

Key points:

- Maintain strict adherence to policies ensuring permanent employment for nGAP lecturers from the start.
- Develop clearer guidelines for fund reallocation and address financial dissatisfaction among participants.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms for universities to prevent premature contract terminations or misuse of funds.
- Address workload clarity and ensure alignment with institutional policies.
- Strengthen mentorship training to equip mentors for better support roles.
- Create institutional mechanisms for consistent onboarding and induction processes.

Discussion and comments on the presentation

- **Clarification on transitioning to the Future Professors Programme (FPP):**
Clarification was sought regarding whether moving from the nGAP to the Future Professors Programme (FPP) would constitute a termination of the nGAP contract. In response, it was explained that there would be no forfeiture of funds dedicated to remuneration; however, all other benefits associated with the nGAP programme would be forfeited. Candidates can not participate in both the nGAP and FPP simultaneously. Furthermore, there would be no financial obligation to the university, provided the candidate remained employed at the same institution.
- **Accountability of universities within the nGAP programme:**
A question was raised about accountability within the nGAP programme, particularly regarding universities' handling of the nGAP lecturer positions if a candidate is required to pay back up to R350,000 for non-completion. It was clarified that any institution claiming that an nGAP lecturer's position was no longer available was in error, as no university should terminate nGAP-related employment contracts, especially in the initial six years. Vice-Chancellors of all participating universities had signed terms and conditions affirming that nGAP appointments were permanent employment contracts.
- **Utilisation of remaining funds post-PhD completion:**
When asked if leftover funds after completing a PhD could be used to purchase equipment, it was clarified that, with approval from DHET, funds could be used for equipment essential to fulfilling research objectives. However, it was emphasised that the university remained responsible for providing standard tools of trade.
- **Capacity development and programme objectives:**
A question arose on maintaining capacity development without conflicting with nGAP objectives. The response acknowledged that while some procedures may seem restrictive, they were agreed upon by all parties involved to meet both individual and institutional needs. The nGAP programme was designed to support capacity development specific to each university. The programme does not support transferring capacity across universities, hence the structured yearly design. In cases where an institution seeks to transfer an nGAP lecturer between departments, they must engage DHET through a formal change request process, as inter-university transfers could disrupt programme stability.
- **Budget for international travel and conferences:**
On the concern that the budget for international travel or conferences was insufficient, the DHET acknowledged this issue and noted that consultations

had taken place with other directorates to increase support for nGAP lecturers. nGAP lecturers were also encouraged to apply for mobility allowances within their own institutions.

- **Criteria for workload determination:**
A question was posed regarding workload criteria and whether DHET provided guidelines, as workload had been a source of tension. It was clarified that DHET did not set specific workload guidelines, as this determination was left to individual universities and departments, which have unique requirements.
- **Delays in candidate approval:**
On the issue of delays in candidate approval, it was noted that the approval process was hierarchical, and executive management had been asked to address these delays.
- **Cost allocation for salaries and its impact on retention:**
A final question inquired about the criteria for salary cost allocation, with concerns raised that salary frustrations affected livelihoods and drove candidates to seek other opportunities. It was noted that the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) is used as guideline to determine increments which gave a 4.3% increase in 2023 and 4.8% for 2024. Universities should make commitments to augment the funds granted by the DHET for the programme.

4. Presentation by the National Research Foundation (NRF) 09:40 – 10:00

Ms Faith Shikhumo and Mr Sello Moloi presented on behalf of the National Research Foundation (NRF) on opportunities for funding available from the NRF.

- 1.1 Mr. Moloi shared a disclaiming note regarding the NRF's recent corporate restructuring that has placed him in a new department/unit called Next Generation and Emerging Researchers Department.
- 1.2 Mr. Moloi provided an overview of the NRF's mandate within the national research landscape with the following focus areas:
 - Advancing knowledge: supported research initiatives through funding, access to research infrastructure platforms, and provision of essential research equipment.
 - Transforming lives: provided postgraduate and targeted support for emerging and early-career researchers.
 - Inspiring the nation: engaged the public in science to foster a culture of scientific curiosity and awareness.
 - Strengthening the National System of Innovation (NSI): built partnerships and synergies while offering system-wide information and strategic insights.

- 1.3 It was presented that the NRF is advancing a Research Impact Agenda which intends to support and enable research potential impact. The potential for impact of the research is realised through either:
- Knowledge impact: scientific advances in understanding, interpretation, methods, theory and applications.
 - Societal impact: the value research adds to society through improvements in the social, economic or environmental spheres.
- 1.4 The NRF funding instruments supporting progression from emerging researcher to lead researcher:
- Pre-doctoral and Early Career/Emerging: nGAP, Postdoctoral, Thuthuka (TTK), Black Academics Advancement Programme (BAAP), Young Academics Accelerator Programme (YAAP)
 - Post-PhD Early Career/Emerging: TTK, BAAP
 - Mid-Career/Exceptional Early Career: Competitive Support for Unrated Researchers (CSUR), and Y-Rated
- 1.5 Ms Shikhumo presented potential integrations between the NRF in the nGAP programme. Ms Shikhumo emphasised that the NRF does not fund what the DHET funds through the nGAP programme. The DHET provides holistic and complementary support for career development, but the NRF avails a Research Development Grant for nGAP scholars in the first and second year of appointment to enable these young academics to develop and submit applications in competitive funding instruments such as the Thuthuka-PhD and Post-PhD and to other funders and donors.

The grant assists in the following ways:

- Proposal development (bespoke funding e.g. mobility for research, research instrument development, statistical technical support; literature review; or supervisor/ collaborator/community engagements); and/or
 - Research costs for university approved research projects (including travel, materials and supplies, small research equipment or science engagement).
- 1.6 The grant aims to assist scholars in developing competitive funding applications and conducting approved research projects. Scholars on the PhD track are eligible for R30,000 per annum, while those on the Post-PhD track are eligible for R50,000 per annum.
- 1.7 Ms Shikhumo emphasised that applicants should always check their nrfconnect profile.
- 1.8 Furthermore, Ms Shikhumo noted several challenges faced by nGAP scholars in accessing the grant, including:

- Delays in updating NRF profiles and incomplete submission of required documents.
- Budget misalignment and incorrect categorisation of expenses, leading to delays in fund release.
- Limited advertisement of the grant, resulting in eligible scholars missing the application opportunity.

1.9 In conclusion, Ms. Shikumo emphasised the importance of NRF funding as a tool for supporting emerging researchers on their academic journey. They encouraged scholars to actively engage with their mentors and supervisors to maximize the benefits of the grant.

Key points:

- Increase awareness of available NRF grants and address accessibility challenges through timely updates and targeted communication.
- Promote engagement between scholars, mentors, and supervisors to optimise grant usage.
- Integrate research impact priorities into nGAP lecturers' academic goals to foster societal and knowledge impact.

Discussion and comments on the presentation (10:00-11:00)

- **Error message on NRF profile:**
An attendee sought advice from the NRF regarding an error message appearing on their profile. In response, it was explained that the NRF system had recently been updated, which might cause occasional error messages. Candidates were encouraged to refer to their award letters, as once an award is granted, recipients are also published on the NRF website. Additionally, candidates were advised to use the contact details provided for each call for any further assistance.
- **Ethical clearance requirements:**
Another attendee asked for clarification on the ethical clearance requirement, as some programmes require additional ethical clearance certificates. The NRF clarified that it accepts the initial institutional ethical clearance certificates. Any secondary ethical considerations are managed primarily by the university, and additional clearance can be attached at a later stage if necessary.
- **Eligibility for the BAAP programme:**
Regarding the BAAP programme, a question was raised on whether it was open to all candidates or required university nomination. It was clarified that BAAP does not allow self-nomination, as it is conducted in partnership with industry partners, such as the First Rand Foundation, and requires university endorsement.

- **Importance of timely queries:**
The NRF team emphasised that queries should not be raised with the NRF at the last minute. Applicants were encouraged to contact the NRF if there were no progress updates, as timely communication aids in troubleshooting. Technical issues are forwarded to IT, and a ticket number is assigned for tracking the query.

5. Group Discussions on Challenges and Expectations 11:20 – 12:50

Please refer to page 7-9 of the Workshop Report.

6. Being an nGAP Lecturer: Experiences, Challenges and Lessons 12:50 – 13:10

- 1.1 Ms Gail Motlhaudi from the Sol Plaatjie University conducted a motivational session that drew parallels between the PhD journey and the climb up Mount Kilimanjaro, highlighting five key lessons.
- 1.2 The speaker pointed out that preparation is essential, noting that the PhD journey is a marathon, not a sprint. Candidates were advised to pace themselves carefully, seeking information and doing thorough research to understand the full scope of the commitment. Identifying one's "why" for embarking on this journey was encouraged, as it provides a strong anchor during challenging periods and helps align personal goals with the program's duration and objectives.
- 1.3 Another lesson, she described is "pole, pole" (Swahili for "slowly, slowly"), drew attention to the value of moving at a sustainable pace. The nGAP journey, with its combined focus on completing a PhD and participating in training and development, is a lengthy process. Slow, steady progress allows for meaningful advancement, and moving slowly does not equate to lack of progress.
- 1.4 The process of acclimatisation on Mount Kilimanjaro was presented as a metaphor for the PhD journey's challenges, where setbacks are sometimes part of growth. Ms Motlhaudi explained that, just as the body must adapt to high altitudes, setbacks or "dips" may feel discouraging but often serve to prepare individuals for future success, symbolising a launch toward higher achievements.
- 1.5 She shared the concept of a base camp as a reminder of the importance of rest and grounding. In climbing, base camps serve as places of recovery, reducing the risk of altitude sickness. Similarly, in the PhD journey, creating a place or routine for rest helps maintain resilience. This place of rest could be a physical space, a supportive person, or an activity that provides a sense of grounding.

- 1.6 Finally, the importance of a support structure was emphasised. The speaker highlighted the nGAP community as a valuable built-in support network, reminding participants that if a support structure does not already exist, they should actively work to create one. Building a network of future academics and colleagues fosters a collaborative and supportive environment, crucial for navigating the challenges of both the PhD and academic journey.

7. Managing the Mentor-Mentee Relationship: Looking Back on Our nGAP Journey

14:30 – 14:50

- 7.1 Professor Kabelo Chuene from the University of Limpopo led a reflective session, sharing insights from her journey as a mentor and her approach to mentee relationships.
- 7.2 The first lesson she shared stressed the importance of understanding the work conducted by the mentee. Prof Chuene noted that where there is understanding, there is true comprehension. However, this does not mean that a mentor must be a specialist in the mentee's specific field, as mentorship is distinct from a supervisory role. Part of this understanding involves engaging with the mentee's interests to foster a well-rounded relationship.
- 7.3 The second lesson highlighted the need to recognise that mentees are individuals first, and researchers second. Acknowledging the mentee's human experience is vital for maintaining balance in the mentor-mentee relationship. Unlike formal assessments, a mentor-mentee relationship functions as a quality assurance buffer that considers context and personal experience.
- 7.4 Prof Chuene's third lesson focused on the value of observation and active listening. She explained that listening to mentees helps mentors identify areas for growth and improvement. She shared an example from her own practice, where she observed her mentee's classes and conducted debriefing sessions to understand the mentee's thought processes and planning. Through this experience, she observed that many lecturers tend to assess for compliance rather than purpose. She stressed that assessments should be intentional, as the time spent on marking can become frustrating without a clear understanding of its purpose.
- 7.5 The fourth lesson concerned teaching materials and knowledge management. Prof Chuene encouraged mentees to inquire about existing resources within their departments that could support lecture preparation.
- 7.6 Additionally, she advised mentees to define their teaching philosophy, as this reflective process can enhance their learning and development as educators.

Key points:

- Develop frameworks that balance professional and personal support for mentees.
- Introduce intentional, goal-oriented assessment practices to reduce administrative frustration.
- Promote teaching philosophy development for mentees to refine their instructional approaches

8. The Role of an nGAP Manager 14:50 – 15:10

- 8.1 Dr Mandy Hlengwa presented on the role of the nGAP Manager as outlined in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), incorporating practical considerations.
- 8.2 She noted that the SOP concluded with clause 52, which specifically details the responsibilities of the nGAP Manager. According to clause 52, the role of the nGAP Manager is to coordinate and oversee the effective implementation of the nGAP within the university. The responsibilities included:
- Representing and coordinating the application process for posts advertised by the DHET.
 - Managing and approving changes made during the implementation of the nGAP.
 - Acting as the liaison between the university and the DHET.
 - Coordinating the submission of all required narrative and financial reports.
 - Overseeing and coordinating all nGAP activities within the university.
- 8.3 Dr Hlengwa further highlighted that clause 52 specifies these responsibilities as “not limited to” the tasks listed, allowing for flexibility based on contextual needs.
- 8.4 She noted that nGAP functions are often situated within three different areas: human resources, the research office, and teaching and learning centres. The functional location of the nGAP Manager within an institution reflects the university’s interpretation of the nGAP programme’s operation.
- 8.5 In day-to-day practice, the nGAP Manager serves as a connector, linking all parties involved in the programme. This role involves managing internal stakeholders, including coordinating efforts with human resources, finance, and academic faculties.
- 8.6 Additionally, Dr Hlengwa described the nGAP Manager as the programme’s custodian and protector, acting as the accounting officer responsible for ensuring that recipients fulfil their programme obligations.

- 8.7 She stressed the importance of the Manager staying informed about each recipient's progress, particularly regarding their PhD completion.
- 8.8 Dr Hlengwa also highlighted the need for mentoring support within the nGAP Manager's role, given that for many nGAP recipients, this is their first formal employment. While this support is not as intensive as the formal mentor role, it includes guidance on understanding employment contracts and fostering professional development.
- 8.9 Lastly, Dr Hlengwa pointed out that while the SOP provides a foundational structure, Managers have the discretion to shape the programme to meet their university's specific needs, such as organising writing retreats.

Key points:

- Clarify the expectations of nGAP managers and provide flexibility to adapt roles based on institutional contexts.
- Strengthen nGAP managers' ability to act as connectors between internal stakeholders and DHET.
- Expand training opportunities for nGAP managers to enhance their oversight and mentorship skills.

DAY 2 – 15 OCTOBER 2024
09:00 – 13:30
nGAP Lecturers Induction Workshop

1. Opening, introductions and welcome
09:00 – 09:05

- 1.1 Ms Silindile Shabalala welcomed all attendees and briefly reflected on Day 1 of the nGAP Lecturers Induction Workshop, which focused on understanding the challenges and experiences of the lecturers.
- 1.2 She noted the extensive discussions had helped contextualise the experiences of nGAP lecturers, managers, and mentors. She expressed gratitude for the pivotal roles played by managers and mentors in ensuring the successful delivery of the programme.
- 1.3 Ms Shabalala acknowledged the concern that some of the challenges raised during the previous day's meeting were operational matters between the candidates and their contracting universities, and thus beyond the scope of DHET.
- 1.4 She highlighted that Day 2 would focus on the support structure of the nGAP programme, discussions around the mentorship committee, and the presentation of the online reporting template.

2. Purpose of the workshop and update on the next phase
09:05 – 09:20

- 2.1 Ms Mandisa Cakwe, the Acting Chief Director of the Teaching and Development Directorate (University Branch) at DHET, reflected that the ideal goal for the nGAP programme was full institutionalisation. She acknowledged that while the challenges highlighted reflected the programme's character, significant strides have also been made. She emphasised the need for universities to be innovative in addressing these challenges.
- 2.2 Ms Cakwe stated that DHET's responsibility was to create opportunities that enabled universities to take ownership of the programme.
- 2.3 She noted that DHET's current role was to ensure that universities were prepared to operate independently and collaborate regionally in implementing the programme.

- 2.4 She stressed that the quality of applications for the nGAP programme was poor, with many applications being returned for corrections. She expressed concern that applications from different departments within the same institution often appeared inconsistent, despite ultimately being submitted by a single nGAP Manager.
- 2.5 She further noted that the online reporting template would be presented later and encouraged participants to engage in optimising its design.

3. Mentor Committee Presentation

09:20 – 09:45

- 3.1 In introducing the next segment of the session, Ms Cakwe noted that while there had been attempts to establish the Mentor Committee, COVID-19 had presented challenges in effectively implementing the programme.
- 3.2 She further noted that mentorship challenges were not unique to the nGAP programme, as similar challenges were observed in NESP and USDP. It was suggested that mentor representatives from NESP and USDP be included in the Mentor Committee
- 3.3 Dr Maréve Biljohn from the University of the Free State was the main presenter for the Mentor Committee. In her introduction, she noted that she served as a mentor for nGAP candidates and as a member of the UCDP Committee for the Advancement of Mentorship.
- 3.4 Dr Biljohn provided background on the establishment of the committee. During last year's nGAP Induction on 15 September 2023, nGAP mentors nominated members to serve on a committee tasked with developing and advancing a mentorship programme for nGAP lecturers. The committee was established to address challenges experienced by mentors. As Ms Shabalala had highlighted, mentors play a pivotal role in the programme, making the uniform design of mentorship essential.
- 3.5 On 29 November 2023, a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson were elected. Dr Biljohn was elected Chairperson, and Prof Mathildah Mokgatle was elected Deputy Chairperson.
- 3.6 The term of office for the Mentor Committee was confirmed as 2024–2026.
- 3.7 The objectives of the Mentor Committee were outlined as structuring a mentorship framework for the nGAP programme across South African universities and deliberating on actions to advance the mentoring of UCDP programmes.
- 3.8 Dr Biljohn explained that the committee was integral to DHET's efforts to

formalise a mentoring programme for the UCDP including the nGAP. The committee's purpose was to develop a structured mentorship approach to support nGAP lecturers in four key areas: enculturation within their discipline and work environment, professional development, career progression, and well-being.

- 3.9 She detailed the specific functions and responsibilities of the Mentor Committee as follows:
- Assisting DHET in formulating a formal mentoring programme for UCDP lecturers.
 - Recommending a comprehensive mentoring support programme tailored for UCDP lecturers.
 - Developing a project plan that includes a list of activities aimed at supporting UCDP lecturers in their mentorship journey.
 - Contributing to the creation of documents and guidelines that will guide the mentoring process.
 - Engaging in the implementation and monitoring of mentoring guidelines across participating universities to ensure consistency.
 - Dr. Biljohn added that the committee will review its remit on an annual basis, with any proposed amendments submitted to DHET for approval and consideration.
- 3.10 Dr Biljohn introduced the UCDP Mentor Committee as follows:
- Prof Germarie Viljoen - NWU (mentor)
 - Prof Matthew Adigun - UniZulu (mentor)
 - Prof Cina Mosito - NMU (mentor)
 - Prof Caroline Khoathane - TUT (mentor)
 - Prof Learnmore Kambizi - CPUT (mentor)
 - Dr Mona Matiwane - UM (nGAP Manager)
 - Ms Janine Seneka - UWC (Academic Coordinator)
 - Mrs Tshegohatso Chifokoyo - SPU (nGAP Manager)

The advisory/ex-officio members of the committee are:

- Dr Harrie Esterhyse - NMU (UCDP Manager)
 - Ms Silindile Shabalala - DHET (Deputy Director - UCDP)
 - Mr Calvin Pennels - DHET (Assistant Director - UCDP)
- 3.11 Dr Biljohn noted that the committee had convened on several occasions since 2023 and had commissioned three research reports. For 2024, the committee planned three key activities: commissioning a mentor needs report, a promotions criteria report, and a wellness report. She emphasised the importance of mentors, managers, and mentees participating when contacted by researchers.
- 3.12 She presented the project scope for the three reports:
- The mentor needs report aimed to determine the needs analysis, identify gaps, and make recommendations.

- The wellness report aimed to examine existing wellness services, analyse current mentee wellness needs, and identify gaps. The scope included highlighting best practices and providing recommendations.
 - The promotions criteria report sought to analyse existing institutional promotions criteria across South Africa's 26 public universities, conduct a trend and gap analysis, and develop a standard development plan.
- 3.13 Dr Biljohn confirmed that calls for the research projects had been finalised, and the contracting of research teams was underway.

Key points:

- Enhance mentorship programmes by incorporating insights from the planned mentor needs, wellness, and promotion criteria research.
- Address gaps in mentor capacity and create opportunities for mentors to share best practices at institutional and regional levels.
- Improve communication strategies to ensure timely and comprehensive dissemination of programme updates.

Feedback and Discussion

09:45 – 11:00

- 3.14 Ms Cakwe expressed her appreciation for the mentor committee's efforts in addressing system challenges, with special acknowledgment to Ms Shabalala for her role in coordinating the establishment of the first mentorship committee of its kind.
- 3.15 Ms Cakwe facilitated the discussion session, during which various questions, comments, and recommendations emerged.
- 3.16 A question was raised about whether the mentor committee primarily addresses the needs of mentees and whether supervisors should also be considered key stakeholders. It was noted that the best practice report would guide mentors and planned workshops. Dr Biljohn acknowledged that while the focus is primarily on mentees, mentors also need to be capacitated to provide adequate support. Regarding supervisors, the need to sensitize them to the needs of nGAP lecturers was identified, but specific strategies had not yet been determined.
- 3.17 A comment related to NESP highlighted that mentorship is formally permitted in year three of the agreement but is practically available in the first year. It was suggested that the committee consider agreements that could affect research outputs. This input was noted, with the hope that related insights would emerge from the research.

- 3.18 Another comment pointed out the lack of focus in the presentation on academic leadership and research capability for mentees. The committee responded that the promotions criteria addressed these areas, and the best practice research would further guide this concern.
- 3.19 A request was made to share the presentation with other nGAP managers.
- 3.20 Questions arose about ensuring mentee participation in planned research projects and whether DHET could extend similar support to non-nGAP academics. DHET acknowledged that this posed a significant challenge, emphasising that universities should institutionalise lessons from programmes such as nGAP and NESP. It was also noted that while some universities are not participating in nGAP, others are applying for additional posts.
- 3.21 Communication to universities and dissemination of research findings were discussed. A letter from DHET to Vice Chancellors would outline the participants required for research projects, with notifications to follow. While the UCDP would relay communication from the committee, current communication gaps were acknowledged.
- 3.22 Dr Esterhyse mentioned the launch of the nGAP website as a resource for accessing program-related information.
- 3.23 A suggestion was made for the mentor committee to enhance visibility and advocate for nGAP across universities. Increased visibility could promote broader participation by mentors.
- 3.24 A recommendation was made to establish clear boundaries defining what mentorship entails and does not entail. This clarity would help streamline expectations.
- 3.25 Another comment highlighted that mentees meet regularly, but mentors lack opportunities to share best practices at institutional or regional levels. It was suggested that mentors engage more actively to promote knowledge sharing.
- 3.26 The prioritisation of wellness in the mentorship programme was recommended.
- 3.27 Concerns were raised about the growing number of retiring lecturers in higher education, contradicting claims that universities cannot place nGAP lecturers. It was suggested that marketing teams and grant offices better position nGAP within institutions to address these placement challenges and institutional opportunities.
- 3.28 When asked if the mentor committee could support mentor workshops at institutions, it was clarified that no assistance could be provided at the current stage.

- 3.29 Prof Nomfundo Moroe from WITS shared her experience as part of the Phase 1 nGAP pilot intake. She highlighted that she did not have to wait for six years to be promoted. By her third year, she had completed her PhD, and in her fourth year, she was promoted to Senior Lecturer. Before the end of the six-year nGAP journey, she achieved a second promotion to Associate Professor. Currently, Prof. Moroe mentors two nGAP lecturers, reflecting the success and impact of the programme on her academic trajectory.
- 3.30 Dr Biljohn noted that many of the questions and recommendations would be addressed through the three research projects currently underway. While comprehensive answers were not available, the research would provide insights without concluding on assumptions. Dr Biljohn encouraged active participation in these projects to ensure that the questions and comments raised were considered.
- 3.31 In closing, Ms Cakwe reflected on the development of nGAP SOPs, highlighting how universities, such as DUT, had adapted DHET's national SOPs to meet institutional needs. She emphasised that national policies are broad enough to accommodate diverse contexts and encouraged universities to learn from one another to enhance their policies and processes.

4. Presentation on Changes and Updates 11:20 – 11:30

- 4.1 Ms Cakwe introduced the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST), noting that they were assisting in the development of a national database for the nGAP programme. She explained that the plan was to create a system that would benefit all stakeholders, including DHET and all 26 public universities. CREST presented their progress and outlined the expectations from universities once the system was operational.
- 4.2 CREST representatives, Kevin Wildschut and Florus Duvenage, presented the management information system interface, highlighting its key features:
- A module where personal and institutional information could be added and updated.
 - From an institutional perspective, a page showing all nGAP academics registered at the various institutions.
 - A narrative report, which was identified as the only missing data.
 - A status field was also added to provide real-time updates on activities.
 - NMU, as the implementation partner, would have access to the administration interface, offering an overview per institution and access to narrative reports.
 - DHET would have access to nGAP reports, including the ability to export data.

- 4.3 CREST indicated that their next steps involved gathering all academic data.
- 4.4 In response to a question about when the system would go live, it was explained that the next steps included determining user access to the system and cleaning the data.
- 4.5 It was noted that integrating financial systems of the university and these systems would create an almost impossible situation for the system to maintain. Integrating financial systems poses financial risks.
- 4.6 It was recommended that flags and nudges be included in the system to assist with reporting targets and timelines. This would not only assist the implementation partner and DHET, but the universities as well. CREST noted that they would need a specification of the dates, but it can be integrated.
- 4.7 During the discussions, a question was raised about why managers would not have access to the narrative section. Dr Esterhuysen clarified that this decision was to maintain confidentiality and protect the platform, especially for reporting sensitive issues such as sexism or discrimination.
- 4.8 Ms Cakwe acknowledged the importance of confidentiality but suggested that universities should still be made aware of the narrative section, particularly if complaints arose.
- 4.9 Dr. Kota-Nyati noted the potential for victimisation during reporting, which justified separate reporting mechanisms. It was agreed that a decision needed to be made regarding the feedback process.
- 4.10 The floor expressed the view that transparency should be balanced with providing a safe space for reporting, as secrecy could undermine the integrity of the programme.
- 4.11 CREST confirmed that they would conduct online training sessions once the system was ready.
- 4.12 Ms Cakwe emphasised that until the database/system became active, reporting would continue manually. Once the system was operational, existing data would be transferred.
- 4.13 In response to a question about who would input the data, it was clarified that managers and lecturers would be responsible for entering main data fields such as biographic and academic information.
- 4.14 Dr Kota-Nyati suggested that the thinking, purpose, principles, roles, and responsibilities behind the system's design should be shared. This would ensure that the product was well-informed, aligned with stakeholders' needs, and designed to serve everyone effectively.

Key points:

- Finalise the national database for nGAP and implement training sessions to ensure smooth adoption.
- Balance transparency with confidentiality in reporting mechanisms to maintain programme integrity.
- Develop a shared understanding of the system's purpose, roles, and responsibilities among stakeholders.

5. Open-floor engagement with Managers

11:30 – 13:00

- 5.1 Ms Cakwe introduced Ms Vuyo Rorwana from TUT, who shared her testimonial about utilising funding instruments available through DHET's directorate responsible for international scholarships and mobility.
- 5.2 Ms Rorwana acknowledged that the mobility component of the nGAP funds had been highlighted as a challenge throughout the workshop. However, she shared how her office effectively utilised the opportunities available. She noted the DHET's international scholarship email, which provides updates on available scholarships every Friday.
- 5.3 She highlighted a call from last year (2023) for the Fulbright Scholarship shared via the International Scholarships Directorate. She forwarded the opportunity to all nGAP lecturers at TUT, but only one lecturer responded. The candidate was successful and benefited from a scholarship that covered accommodation, return flights, a monthly stipend, and the opportunity to collaborate with other researchers. The trip incurred no costs from TUT's budget. The only challenge faced was that the candidate was in their second year, and internal policies were restrictive. A motivation was sent to the Vice-Chancellor for approval, which was ultimately granted.
- 5.4 Ms Rorwana emphasised that Vice Chancellors are aware of the programme and committed to it through the Memorandum of Agreement. She encouraged others not to hesitate in motivating for such opportunities, expressing confidence that Vice Chancellors would be supportive.
- 5.5 Ms Rorwana also shared her personal success in applying for the Humphrey Scholarship within the Fulbright Scholarship programme, which she was awarded.
- 5.6 In closing, she encouraged other nGAP Managers not to limit themselves to the nGAP budget or programme alone. Since nGAP lecturers are employed as permanent staff, they are eligible for other university opportunities.

- 5.7 She added that two NESP scholars from TUT had also been granted the opportunity to present in Portugal.
- 5.8 Ms Cakwe concluded by noting that TUT had initially struggled with implementing the nGAP programme, but the progress and growth made since then had been remarkable.

Key points:

- Leverage institutional funding opportunities, like scholarships, to supplement programme resources.
- Encourage proactive engagement with Vice-Chancellors to secure additional support for nGAP initiatives.
- Advocate for collaboration and resource-sharing among universities to address common challenges.

6. Any Other Business

13:00 – 13:30

- 6.1 The NESP, nGAP, and UCDP Send-Off Colloquium had been combined due to declining numbers, which was noted as a concern by DHET. One of the objectives of the programme was to fast-track the attainment of PhDs for incoming lecturers, enabling them to access opportunities within their institutions and the broader academic space. The session included comments and feedback on this objective.
- 6.2 It was noted that 95% of nGAP lecturers in the system had achieved an average of 70% or higher in their master's degrees. Given that most nGAP lecturers are high achievers, questions were raised about why so many lecturers struggled to complete their PhDs:
- 6.3 Comments from the floor identified supervision capacity as a key issue. Overloaded supervisors often lacked the capacity to provide adequate support for students. Additionally, it was observed that the system is populated with lecturers who are still students themselves, needing to complete their PhDs, further straining supervision resources.
- 6.4 Another point raised was the importance of tracking nGAP lecturers after completing the programme. It was noted that many lecturers were completing their PhDs before the six-year mark, which reflected cohort-based trends that were not unusual.
- 6.5 Concerns were raised about the phrasing of the "Send-Off Colloquium," as it could imply an unintended message. The importance of viewing lecturers as beneficiaries of the system, who could in turn give back through

mentorship, was emphasised. It was noted that while capacity is being built, there is a risk of lecturers being lost to the system.

- 6.6 A significant challenge highlighted was the lengthy timeframe between the submission of posts and their approval by DHET. This delay often resulted in universities filling posts independently due to the slow approval process, leading to missed opportunities and lost talent as candidates pursued positions elsewhere. The delayed turnaround time was noted to affect the programme's credibility within institutions.
- 6.7 The calculation of workload based on the total hours required to complete a PhD was discussed. It was noted that a student should ideally dedicate at least 3 hours per day, or 15 hours per week, to their PhD. Concerns were raised that some lecturers appeared unwilling to commit to this level of work, which in turn affected their ability to meet promotional requirements, including service, community engagement, and teaching and learning.
- 6.8 A recommendation was made to include an FAQ section on the nGAP's website. Additional suggestions included hosting webinars or YouTube info videos once or twice a year to provide information and address common questions.

7. Way Forward

13:30 – 14:00

- 7.1 In closing, Ms Cakwe urged the universities represented to implement some of the recommendations that emerged from the sessions. She put emphasis on that the first steps involved institutionalising the programme effectively.
- 7.2 Additionally, she stressed the need for certain universities to improve the quality of their applications to DHET. Mentors and Managers were encouraged to actively share opportunities available to nGAP lecturers within their respective institutions.
- 7.3 Dr Kota-Nyati reflected on the commitment made by DHET to transform the sector, noting that this commitment should not be underestimated. However, she highlighted that the same concerns were raised year after year and challenged participants to consider what changes could be made, even in the way conversations are approached.
- 7.4 She pointed out that when there is over-support, the agency of individuals or institutions diminishes. Similarly, excessive protection limits empowerment. She questioned how lecturers would fare outside the protected space provided by nGAP and encouraged a focus on creating sustainable independence.
- 7.5 The key undertaking was recognising that though we may refer to the

beneficiaries of the programme as “nGAP lecturers”, their journey reminds us that they are “lecturers in the nGAP”.

- 7.6 Dr Kota-Nyati commended DUT for their efforts in institutionalising the SOPs to fit their specific context.
- 7.7 Furthermore, it was noted communication is a persistent challenge, including for the workshop itself. She encouraged Managers and Coordinators to ensure the sharing of names and contact details to facilitate better communication.
- 7.8 Finally, she expressed gratitude and appreciation to DHET for their ongoing support.

Key points:

- Institutionalise nGAP within universities, focusing on contextual adaptation and sustainability.
- Address recurring challenges by innovating processes and improving communication across stakeholders.
- Foster agency and independence among nGAP lecturers to prepare them for leadership roles outside structured programme environments.



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