



2016 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) REPORT

HELTASA's **mission and vision** is to promote quality in higher education practice through the creation of a synergistic network and the professionalisation of higher education practitioners in Southern Africa in three main areas of focus: policy matters in higher education; developmental practice and educational research.

The core values of HELTASA are: collegiality; professionalism; quality; equity; excellence; development; creativity; criticality; innovation.

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Dr Amanda Hlengwa, *Deputy Chairperson:* Dr Katuri Behari-Leak, *Treasurer:* Dr Delysia Timm, *Secretary:* Dr Karin Wolff, Professor Chris Winberg (Conference 2016), Dr Masebala Tjabane, Dr Languthani Masehela, Ms Vanessa-Jean Merkel

1. INTRODUCTION

South African Higher Education continues to contend with the urgent and persistent calls for equitable education. What we witnessed in 2015 of the co-ordinated student voice should have prepared the sector as a whole for what we experienced in 2016, as the continued campaign of #FeesMustFall. As the campaign extends across the national landscape we have seen the discourse shift from #ZeroIncrease to #FreeEducationNow bringing the focus to the inadequate funding for higher education as a national challenge that affects every student, support staff, academic and university manager alike.

If HELTASA is indeed seen to be the premier association for learning and teaching in Southern Africa, providing support for hundreds of professionals working in the field of higher education teaching and learning across the region, we have our work cut out for us as we grapple with these issues across the uneven context of the sector.

Last year I posed two questions to which we have yet to provide adequate answers. As members of HELTASA our current context requires us to engage rigorously with these questions: what does decolonizing of teaching and learning really look like, and, linked to that, what is the role of academic development in institutional transformation?

In 2016 we have made preliminary progress towards answering these questions by strengthening and supporting the work of the Special Interest Groups (SIGs). We also revamped the set of [criteria for the 2016 submissions](#) for the National Excellence in Teaching Awards. The new criteria encouraged applicants to bring to light what informs their pedagogy and curriculum decisions that respond to the discipline whilst keeping a firm focus on the context in which our teaching and learning takes place.

The very first and newly affirmed Teaching Advancement in Universities (TAU) Fellows are also poised to make their mark and contribute to a scholarly approach to teaching and learning.

2. CONFERENCES

- For the first time the International Consortium for Educational Development (ICED) Conference is hosted on African soil by the HELTASA network. Thank you to our [2016 conference convening team](#) from the Western Cape Universities lead by Chris Winberg, for what promises to be a thought provoking four days of engagement. There were 635 registrations from 33 different countries, of which 423 come from institutions in Africa. More than half the delegates (395) will attend the conference dinner, which promises to a wonderful night of celebration.

- It is a great pleasure to announce that Durban University of Technology (DUT) will host the 2017 conference.

3. 2016 AT A GLANCE

- Annual SIG convener meeting
- First Teaching Advancement in Universities (TAU) Fellows
- The Teaching Excellence Award
- Executive Committee work

4. ANNUAL SIG CONVENER MEETING

- Masebala Tjabane (SIG Liaison portfolio) facilitated what is now seen as an annual event, where SIG conveners workshop strategies to strengthen the work of the SIGs. The workshop held on 26 May was well supported by an enthusiastic and dynamic team of conveners representing established as well as new groups: Foundation SIG (Lynn Coleman CPUT); Tutor / Mentor / SI SIG (Liesl Smith NMMU); Writing Centres SIG (Puleng Sefalane CPUT), Professional Development SIG (Anne Olsen NMMU), First Year Experience / South African National Resource Centre SIG (Annsilla Nyar UJ); Technology Enhanced Learning SIG (Alanna Riley UFH); and Action Research SIG (Pieter du Toit UP).
- As HELTASA chair, I opened the workshop by sharing with the SIG conveners the HELTASA 5-year plan. There are four strategic objectives of the plan (outlined in more detail in section 7). This gave the conveners an opportunity to see how SIG activities can integrate the organisation's objectives with their own plans.
- Each SIG convener reported on activities since the 2015 AGM and it was noted that some SIG activities were already promoting the newly identified objectives of HELTASA's 5-year plan. All activities of the SIGs are accessible on the HELTASA webpage, thanks to the newly revamped [SIG page](#).

5. FIRST TAU FELLOWS

- The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) approved a collaborative Teaching Development Grant (TDG) for a pilot programme that “... *aims to contribute towards the enhancement of teaching and learning in higher*

- education in South Africa by supporting the development of a cadre of academics across institutions and disciplines as scholars, leaders and mentors in their fields.*
- Brenda Leibowitz at the University of Johannesburg convened the project. TAU Fellowships Programme Committee members are: Jean Farmer (Stellenbosch University), Diane Grayson (Council on Higher Education), Amanda Hlengwa (Rhodes University), Jeff Jawitz (University of Cape Town), Kwena Masha (University of Limpopo), Kibbie Naidoo (University of Johannesburg) and Masebala Tjabane (Vaal University of Technology). Elizabeth de Kadt and Precious Sipuka administer the project.
 - Participants included deputy deans, professors, and winners of previous national teaching excellence awards. Participants came from a wide range of disciplines and are mostly mid-career academics, though some are senior. All are committed to enhancing teaching and learning, and to making a difference in their various environments.
 - The first round of the TAU programme came to an end in August 2016. The 50 candidates – academics committed to teaching and learning at 20 South African higher education institutions – engaged with each other about the scholarship of teaching and learning, teaching excellence and change and transformation over a period of 13 months. They have all achieved the requirements of the programme:
 - managed an individual project,
 - participated in all the face to face and online learning activities,
 - and contributed to an enquiry group process and report,and so all are now officially “TAU Fellows”

The reports of their individual investigations and more details about the cohort are available on the HELTASA site on the [TAU page](#). A second round of the project is anticipated awaiting confirmation from the DHET. The TAU organizing committee will keep in contact with DVCs and Heads of Teaching and Learning Centres regarding the status of the project.

6. CHE/HELTASA TEACHING AWARDS

- The 2016 committee convened by Sioux Mckenna (Rhodes University) comprised of Diane Grayson (CHE), Amanda Hlengwa (HELTASA chair), Kwena Masha (University of Limpopo), Langutani Masehela (University of Venda), Jean Farmer (Stellenbosch University), Masebala Tjabane (Vaal University of Technology), Rubby Dhunpath (University of KwaZulu-Natal), Lindsay Clowes (University of Western Cape) and Marianne Engelbrecht (CHE).
- As the convener of the awards committee, Sioux Mckenna has brought in welcome changes to conceptual and administrative aspects of the awards. The focus was on helping applicants submit portfolios that demonstrate how our curriculum development processes encourage innovative approaches designed to improve the student experience. The criteria seek teaching experiences that acknowledge and incorporate into the learning experiences the rich diversity of

our student population represented in our classrooms. While the awards focus on how disciplinary specialists are committed to scholarly enquiry that encourages students to engage deeply and critically with disciplinary knowledge, the criteria firmly acknowledge the complexities involved in quality teaching and call for an account of the impact of local, global and social contexts.

- All public institutions were invited to submit up to three nominations. The number of applications increased from the 20 received in 2015 to 31 applications from 16 institutions. We were pleased that both the number of applicants and the spread of institutions has increased each year. The committee short-listed 10 applicants who were subsequently interviewed via Skype. The five winners and commendees will be announced at the gala dinner during the ICED/HELTASA 2016 conference. On the last day of the conference the winners will be participating in a panel presentation.

7. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WORK

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020

- Four strategic objectives emerged from the executive committee meetings. These are ongoing concerns/activities, that will frame HELTASA's position in contributing to the teaching and learning agenda in the country. These objectives fall within an overarching HELTASA purpose statement:
- *Strategic Objective 1:* To continue creating an enabling environment for AD practitioners to engage with and advance SOTL.
- *Strategic Objective 2:* Particular focus on strengthening regionally and nationally collaborated AD events, beyond the annual conference.
- *Strategic Objective 3:* Creating opportunities for members to be more involved in advocacy work by contributing to important policy debates shaping teaching and learning.
- *Strategic Objective 4:* Ensuring the sustainability of the organization as well as maintaining and developing new strategic partnerships.

CRITICAL DIALOGUES

- The purpose of the HELTASA-led critical dialogues is to initiate opportunities for members and others in the higher education arena to debate key issues affecting the sector, with a particular focus on contemporary topics. The dialogues are designed to gather differing perspectives on how these critical issues affect teaching and learning practice. Competing work commitments as well as increased instability within institutions made the original plan of driving the initiative by an executive member not feasible. The strategy had to change to using the HELTASA website so that the [Critical Dialogues can draw from existing events](#) rather than initiating these public dialogues at regional level.

WEBSITE

- This year the HELTASA logo changed but remains recognizable from the earlier version. The website continues towards the goal of becoming a more interactive space for HELTASA membership.
- SIG landing pages have had an upgrade to allow various online activities that were not possible before.
- The idea is to have an integrated approach to keeping the membership involved and informed about events and activities that will be of interest to them by linking the website, monthly newsletter and our newly launched [Facebook page](#).

8. CONCLUSION

FINANCIAL REPORT

The **financial statement** is included in the conference package and is open for discussion.

ELECTIONS / VACANCIES

At the 2015 AGM the succession plan proposal was passed. I have now served my last term as the chair and Dr Kasturi Behari-Leak who currently holds the position of deputy chair will take over at the end of the 2016 conference. This effectively means at the AGM the next deputy chair will be voted in as the chair elect. There are two additional vacancies on the executive that will be voted in.

It has been an incredible learning experience and a great privilege to serve as an executive member of HELTASA since November 2007. I have now chaired the Executive Committee for two terms and I would like to thank all members of the Executive Committee for their invaluable contributions to HELTASA. I look forward to seeing the organization grow from strength to strength.

Dr Amanda Hlengwa (Chairperson)



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November 2016