
UNIVERSITY DEANS PROGRAMME (UDP)

CONCEPT NOTE AND PLAN 2023

31 May 2023

1. Background

Deans have formed part of the broad group of participants invited to attend HELM's programmes since the inception of its second phase, in 2018. The dean's leadership development interventions were conceptualised in response to the recognition globally that they have extraordinarily little preparation and support for taking up this important bridging role between the academe and administration. Equally important was to ensure that the deans programme was relevant and responsive to a more complex and changing leadership environment.

A HELM work group was established to investigate and engage on the development and delivery of a context specific and responsive programme for deans, led by Professor Denise Zinn. These developments led to the planning and delivery of a deans' workshop in Cape Town on 3 and 4 November 2023, attended by 38 deans and deputy deans from 21 HEIs. The underlying aim of the workshop was to determine, from the target group, what they perceive as their current needs and challenges, and how a dedicated programme may assist them in meeting or addressing these.

This approach is aligned to curriculum design that recognises that participants bring a wealth of knowledge and experience, to their own learning and development, as well as gaps, questions, and critical inquiry, and should be consulted about what would be most relevant, to their own learning and development aspirations and needs.

2. Programme Design

The deans workshop generated a valuable source of information and data which informed the conception and development of the deans' programme. The key premise was to design a tailored and context specific programme that assists in addressing their leadership and management and aligns with the deans' annual planning and operations activities needs in this regard. The objectives and design principles for the University Deans Programme (UDP) are set out below.

2.1 Objectives

- i. To provide an enabling and supportive space for deans to engage with some of the global and local trends which currently shape higher education and will be operating over the next decade.

- ii. To consider the implications of a changing, ever more complex world for deanship in the South African higher education context.
- iii. To consider and engage on the day-to-day experiences of deans and how to create the conditions for managing change and collective problem solving.
- iv. To establish a network of deans who can co-create a learning community which will have a lasting influence on the local HE sector.

2.2 Content, Modality and Audience

The UDP will be offered to groups of 30 deans and deputy Deans as a series of two in-person workshops and take place over a period of 2 days in July, and October in 2023. These workshops will be linked to the deans' annual operational and performance plans and focus on:

- Higher education context
- Strategy and planning
- Approaches to core missions, learning and teaching, research, and engagement
- Transformation theory and praxis
- People development and management
- Fiscal management
- Student engagement and responsibility
- Faculty implementation strategies and challenges
- Personal mastery and leadership development
- Health and wellbeing
- Career trajectory, management, and advancement
- Deans support network
- Personal research/discipline leadership and management

The current HELM Foundations of Leadership induction and on-boarding programme will also be redesigned for new deans, deputy deans and assistant deans and delivered after consultation with the various dean's associations and groupings.

The UDP's approach will combine inputs from leading voices and experts in the global and local HE context, changing dimensions of academic leadership and management, and its implications for the evolving role and responsibilities of Deans. The learning content will be delivered via applied learning principles, innovative interactive methodologies, and small group activities.

The UDP will create an opportunity for reflection and learning, as well as a space for future planning for the academic project at an institutional level. Deans will leave the UDP with a focused set of actions and approaches which will inform their work as academic leaders and managers. It will create a network of deans, who will find value in collaborating with each other on the national higher education stage.

3. Implementation Plan for 2023

It is envisaged that the UDP will commence with its first 2-day workshop on **27 and 28 July 2023 in Cape Town**. The second 2-day workshop will be held on **26 and 27 October in Gauteng**.

All deans and deputy deans will be invited to the workshops and participants selected to ensure demographic representativity as well as the institutional mix of the South African higher education sector.

There is **no enrolment fee** for the UDP as it is being funded by the DHET University Capacity Development Grant and offered as a public service to all universities.

The UDP will be led by Dr Oliver Seale and co-facilitated by Prof Denise Zinn. HELM programme leaders and associates, as well as HE and other specialists will be requested to present their expert input and share experiences in the programmes for the various workshops.

4. Programme Contacts

For more information on the UDP please contact Dr Oliver Seale on email address oliver@helm.ac.za or via mobile phone at 082 425 7386