
The Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme is delivered by Universities South Africa as part of the Department of Higher Education and Training's University Capacity Development Programme.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of these Terms of Reference is to appoint a suitably qualified service provider to undertake a review of the Higher Education Leadership and Management Programme.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Higher Education Leadership and Management (HELM) programme, hosted by Universities South Africa (USAf) and supported by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), was established to develop and strengthen the capacity of leaders and managers across South Africa's public higher education institutions.

Since its inception, HELM has played a pivotal role in shaping institutional leadership, supporting strategic and operational management, and cultivating good governance practices. However, in light of a shifting higher education landscape, evolving leadership demands, and a decade of implementation, a comprehensive review is necessary to assess the relevance, effectiveness, impact, and future orientation of the HELM programme. Given the evolving challenges in higher education and the need to assess impact and future relevance, a comprehensive review of HELM is necessary to determine its effectiveness, alignment with original objectives, and opportunities for enhancement.

Over the years, HELM has evolved into a national platform for leadership development, focusing on building the competencies of both emerging and senior leaders in universities. Its interventions are grounded in the principles of ethical governance, transformational leadership, and evidence-informed decision-making. HELM aligns its activities with the broader policy goals of the National Development Plan 2030, the DHET University Capacity Development Programme (UCDP), and the transformation agenda of USAf.

HELM has developed a comprehensive ecosystem of learning interventions - workshops, leadership academies, short courses, webinars, and digital artefacts - aimed at fostering

adaptive, inclusive and values-driven university leadership. Through partnerships with our public universities HELM promotes the exchange of best practices across the higher education sector.

While the programme content evolves annually, the current framework includes five flagship programme streams, each designed to meet a specific leadership development objective:

- a) Foundations of Leadership (FoL) Programme
 - i. Introduces fundamental leadership principles and personal leadership awareness.
 - ii. Middle and senior academic managers, and senior University managers.
 - iii. Individual leadership development and institutional project preparedness.
- b) Executive Leadership Programme:
 - i. Works with university leaders to nurture their leadership and managerial capabilities, including those of their executives and other senior university leaders.
 - ii. Aims to enable universities to nurture deep layers of capable, high-performing, and sympathetic academic and executive leaders, thus contributing to nurturing universities' own sustainability, most notably their leadership sustainability, and of developing future university leaders.
- c) Women in Leadership (WiL) Programme
 - i. Empowers women in higher education to strengthen confidence, influence, and networks in senior academic or academic-adjacent roles.
 - ii. Humanising pedagogy mentorship, storytelling, and reflective practice.
 - iii. Senior academic and professional staff women identified as potential leaders.
- d) Student Affairs and Student Success (SASS)
 - i. Develops capacity and professionalisation of student support and student affairs managers.
 - ii. Online and face-to-face sessions culminating in a national colloquium and publication of outputs.
- e) ENGAGE Series (Leadership Conversations)
 - i. Regular thought-leadership dialogues addressing system-wide challenges (governance, transformation, digital futures).
 - ii. Webinars, and post-event artefacts shared via HELM's social media channels.
 - iii. Knowledge mobilisation and advocacy for systemic change.

Additional elements such as the Registrar and Deans Workshops, reinforce the ecosystem by targeting specific professional and governance needs.

The aim of HELM is to provide enabling and empowering learning opportunities to new and current middle and senior managers, including in the student affairs and student success domain, so that they may acquire knowledge and skills towards the improvement of individual and organisational performance in our universities.

The **objectives** of HELM are to:

- a) Enhance the leadership capability and capacity of lecturers, emerging, middle and senior managers and executives in the Higher Education (HE) sector.

- b) Expand the pool from which middle and senior academic leaders and managers in the HE sector may be drawn.
- c) Contribute to the stability and effectiveness of institutional leadership and management in the HE sector.
- d) Promote inter-institutional collaborations and partnerships between USAf, HELM and local and international HE institutions.
- e) Promote student success, student support and leadership development, and
- f) Contribute to the realisation of the 'National Development Plan 2030' by advancing a skilled, efficient, and effective leadership in the HE sector that drives economic and social development.

In fulfilling these objectives, HELM seeks to contribute to: (i) individual enablement and work success, (ii) institutional empowerment and improved efficiencies, and (iii) greater sectoral accountability to its key role-players and stakeholders.

To fulfil its objectives, HELM draws on the expertise of leadership and management experts and consultants who have themselves held or are still in senior to executive positions in the universities in South Africa.

It is over four years since the previous review and, since then, HELM completed Phase II of DHET/UCDP funding and is underway with Phase III. In this regard, an opportunity presents itself for another review of the HELM Programme. The review must take cognisance of the previous review, its findings and recommendations.

3. PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The primary purpose of this review is to:

- 3.1 Assess whether HELM has met its intended objectives as set out in the DHET founding documents.
- 3.2 Examine the effectiveness of HELM's delivery model, including the roles of USAf personnel and partners.
- 3.3 Assess whether HELM has achieved its intended outcomes and objectives.
- 3.4 Determine the continued relevance of HELM in the context of national higher education priorities.
- 3.5 Evaluate the effectiveness, governance, management, and delivery of the programme.
- 3.6 Identify gaps, opportunities, and innovations for redesigning or refreshing HELM to meet future sectoral needs.
- 3.7 Gather insights from stakeholders on the impact and quality of HELM.
- 3.8 Provide recommendations on the structure; delivery model; projects and opportunities based on the empirical review.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

To appoint and commission a suitably qualified and experienced Service Provider to conduct a review of HELM and present a report with recommendations. The review will aim to:

4.1 Alignment and Purpose

- 4.1.1 Evaluate the alignment of HELM with the original founding documentation and strategic priorities outlined by DHET and USAf.
- 4.1.2 Examine how well HELM supports national imperatives such as transformation, inclusion, governance, and institutional performance.

4.2 Evaluate Performance and Impact

- 4.2.1 Review the extent to which HELM has delivered on its stated objectives, outputs, and outcomes.
- 4.2.2 Assess the impact of HELM on individual participants, institutional systems, and the broader higher education leadership ecosystem.
- 4.2.3 Evaluate the effectiveness of HELM's activities and interventions in building leadership and management capacity.

4.3 Analyse Governance and Implementation

- 4.3.1 Review the current governance, leadership, and operational management of HELM within USAf.
- 4.3.2 Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of HELM's programme design, administration, resource allocation and resource utilisation, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

4.4 Gauge Stakeholder Perspectives

- 4.4.1 Capture experiences, insights and perceptions of relevance, utility, and impact of HELM interventions from key stakeholders, including:
 - a. DHET representatives including those responsible for HELM
 - b. USAf Executives and HELM program staff
 - c. University leaders (Vice-Chancellors, DVCs, Deans, Directors)
 - d. HELM programme alumni
- 4.4.2 Programme facilitators, mentors, and delivery partners.
- 4.4.3 Partners and facilitators involved in HELM delivery.

4.5 Identify Opportunities for Renewal

- 4.5.1 Investigate emerging trends and international best practices in higher education leadership and management.
- 4.5.2 Identify gaps, emerging leadership trends, and global innovations in higher education leadership and management.
- 4.5.3 Recommend innovations and enhancements for the next phase of HELM, ensuring it is future-oriented, scalable, inclusive, and contextually relevant.

5. SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

The review must encompass:

- 5.1 All HELM programme streams and interventions implemented since inception.
- 5.2 Foundational documents including concept papers, strategy documents, evaluation reports, and DHET correspondence.
- 5.3 Stakeholder engagement across multiple levels (national, institutional, individual).
- 5.4 Delivery mechanisms including content, pedagogy, platforms, partnerships, and facilitation.
- 5.5 Comparative benchmarking with regional and international leadership development models.

6. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach based on best-practice evaluation methodology will be used, comprising:

6.1 Desk-Top Review:

- 6.1.1 Foundational and strategic documents (e.g., DHET mandates, HELM reports, evaluations).
- 6.1.2 Training materials, programme curricula, and participant feedback.
- 6.1.3 M&E data, financial reports, and governance documentation.

6.2 Stakeholder Consultations:

- 6.2.1 In-depth interviews with DHET, USAf, university leaders, alumni, and facilitators.
- 6.2.2 Focus group discussions with programme participants.
- 6.2.3 Online survey to gather broad-based feedback from past and current participants.

6.3 Comparative Benchmarking:

- 6.3.1 Review of similar leadership programmes regionally and globally.
- 6.3.2 Identification of best practices, pedagogical innovations, and digital learning solutions.

6.4 Data Analysis:

- 6.4.1 Qualitative analysis of themes from interviews and documents.
- 6.4.2 Quantitative analysis of programme reach, diversity, impact, and outcomes.

6.5 Validation:

- 6.5.1 A stakeholder validation workshop to test findings and recommendations.

7. KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- 7.1. To what extent has HELM achieved its intended objectives?
- 7.2. Is the programme aligned with national higher education priorities and DHET mandates?
- 7.3. What are stakeholders' perceptions of HELM's relevance, quality, and impact?
- 7.4. How effective and efficient is the delivery model and programme management?
- 7.5. What governance mechanisms exist and are they fit for purpose?
- 7.6. What innovations could be integrated to refresh or reposition HELM?

8. DELIVERABLES

The review will result in the following deliverables:

- 8.1 Inception Report:** Detailing methodology, work plan, tools, timelines, and stakeholder engagement plan.
- 8.2 Interim Progress Briefs:** Updates for the HELM Director and USAf Executive as needed.
- 8.3 Draft Evaluation Report:** Full analysis, findings, and recommendations.
- 8.4 Stakeholder Validation Workshop:** Presentation of draft findings and refinement through stakeholder input.
- 8.5 Final Report:** Comprehensive report with executive summary, findings, strategic options, and detailed recommendations.
- 8.6 Presentation to USAf and DHET:** Final presentation of findings, recommendations, and proposed next steps.

9. OVERSIGHT OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

The review will be managed by the HELM Director.

10. TIMEFRAME

The review is expected to be conducted over a period of 16–20 weeks from inception, including stakeholder consultations and validation processes.

A detailed work plan and timetable will be agreed upon during the inception phase.

11. REVIEWER / CONSULTANT PROFILE

- 11.1. The review should be conducted by an independent team or consultant(s) with expertise reflected across the following specialisation areas:
 - 11.1.1. Higher education policy, leadership, and governance.
 - 11.1.2. Organisational development and change management.

11.1.3. South African higher education sector knowledge.

11.1.4. Monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment.

11.1.5. Stakeholder consultation and facilitation.

11.1.6. Policy and governance analysis.

11.1.7. Curriculum design and adult learning.

11.2. Minimum qualifications and experience:

11.2.1. The lead evaluator should have a minimum of a Masters' degree but ideally a PhD in a relevant field, and at least 10 years' experience in both higher education and programme evaluation.

11.2.2. Team members should have a minimum of a Masters' degree in a relevant field and at least 5-7 years' experience in higher education and programme evaluation.

12. INFORMATION

Additional information, as may be deemed appropriate, must be submitted.

13. ADDING VALUE

It is expected that potential service providers will critique the brief to add value where possible in the proposal to be submitted. Thus, the onus is on the service provider to add value to the brief by leveraging their specialised competencies for the assignment.

14. BUDGET

14.1. This assignment will be funded by HELM and the Consultant will be remunerated in accordance with USAf procurement policies, taking into consideration the range and scope of the work, as well as their level of experience and expertise.

15. TIME AND DURATION

15.1. The assignment will be completed with the presentation of the deliverables as stipulated in 4 above to the Director of HELM by no later than **30 September 2026**.

15.2. The assignment will be regarded as complete when the Director of HELM approves all planned actions and outcomes.

16. SPECIAL CONDITIONS

No service may be rendered without an official purchase order and a signed contract.

17. CONFIDENTIALITY AND OWNERSHIP OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

17.1. The Consultant is required to maintain confidentiality throughout the design and delivery process of this assignment.

17.2. The ownership of the intellectual property rights associated with this work will be vested within the USAf, for its exclusive use.

- 17.3. The Consultant shall request approval of USAf to use materials and information for research or scholarly purposes on information gleaned during this project. Such approval must be obtained in writing from the Contracting Authority.
18. HELM's material is protected by copyright and may not be copied, reproduced, distributed, or used in any form without the prior written permission of USAf.

19. REPORTING

The Consultant will direct any enquiries and report to the Director of HELM at USAf and provide regular feedback on the status of the assignment and any assistance required. A final report will be required at the end of the contract period, outlining the work carried out during the course of the contract, challenges encountered, and potential areas for improvement. The report will also confirm the secure storage of all course content in HELM's repositories.

20. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

- 20.1. The Request for Quotations from individual Consultants should detail how they meet the required qualifications and experience for this assignment as per Section 11 above.
- 20.2. A costed proposal with deliverables and timelines which corresponds with the scope of work must be submitted. Proposals must include:
- 20.1.1 A cover page providing the Consultant's name and all contact information. Should a consultancy or company submit a proposal, then the consultancy or company details (including registration details) should be included, as well as copies of relevant company registration documents and B-BBEE certificate.
 - 20.1.2 Brief CVs highlighting all relevant qualifications, experience and skills.
 - 20.1.3 Copy of ID and highest qualification.
 - 20.1.4 An assignment plan that details an overview of the approach and tasks to be undertaken as outlined in sections 3-7 above.
 - 20.1.5 At least three references from clients or from previous employers where the Consultant has undertaken similar work. Universities South Africa reserves the right to verify the authenticity of these references.
 - 20.1.6 A separate quotation (inclusive of VAT, if applicable) and payment schedule for the services to be provided, as per the scope of work indicated. Quotations must remain valid for a period of 90 days.
 - 20.1.7 Please also check the section "Contracting Authority and Compliance" below for mandatory documents that should accompany the proposal and quotation.
- 20.2 **The closing date for submission of the proposal is Wednesday 11 March 2026, at exactly 16:00.**
- 20.3 The proposals for the envisaged review of HELM should be submitted to Ms Molatelo Motswe via the email address molatelo@helm.ac.za.
- 20.4 Additional information, as may be deemed appropriate, must be submitted.

20.5 If you have not had a response to your application by 11 May 2026, consider your application unsuccessful.

21. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

21.1. The proposal will be evaluated in terms of the requirements of the request and any information which may be deemed necessary.

21.2. Functionality points will be evaluated as follows:

Components to be Evaluated	Evidence	Weighting
Knowledge and experience of the subject matter	Evaluation methodology, knowledge of higher education programming	40
Experience and skills	CVs of the Consultant (as per the key qualifications, skills and experience set in Section 11 above)	30
Deliverables	Deliverables as per the proposal. Ability to render the service as required.	20
References	Client base and written references	10

12.3 Bidders must score a minimum of 80 points to qualify for further evaluation on B-BBEE and price or to be considered as a preferred bidder.

22. COST OF SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL

USAf is not responsible for any costs incurred by the Consultant in the process of developing the proposal.

23. PAYMENTS

23.1. Payment shall be made on rendering of professional satisfactory service and submission of the required invoice and timesheet.

23.2. Payment shall be made within 30 days into the Consultant's bank account after the receipt of an acceptable invoice and timesheet. (Banking details MUST be submitted for payment to be effected).

23.3. Based on the project deliverables, USAf reserves the right to effect payment according to phases completed satisfactorily.

23.4. The service provider shall be responsible for his/her own arrangements about income tax or any other tax obligations, such as may be applicable. The appointed service provider hereby indemnifies the Contracting Authority against any liability that the Contracting Authority may incur as a result of any obligation on the Contracting Authority to pay over any tax on behalf of the service provider as a result of the provisions contained in the agreement to be signed with the appointed service provider. For purposes of the Agreement to be signed with the appointed service provider, the term "tax" will include SITE, PAYE and any other form of tax, including interest and penalties.

The Contracting Authority will, where applicable, deduct 25% of all fees paid to the service provider and remit them to the South African Revenue Service.

24. CONTRACTING AUTHORITY AND COMPLIANCE

24.1. The proposal must either conform to the minimum requirements as set out in this document, or it must be stated clearly how it deviates from these requirements and why. Proposals that strictly adhere to the specifications are preferred. Offers exceeding the minimum requirements of the specifications are acceptable. Minor deviations may be considered.

24.2. The Contracting Authority for the Consultant is USAf. Under this assignment, the Consultant will be accountable to the Director of HELM.

24.3. This document will form part of the signed contract between the successful Consultant and USAf once the proposal has been accepted by USAf.

24.4. Non-Compliance with Delivery Terms

24.4.1. As soon as it becomes known to USAf that the service provider will not be able to render services within the expected period and/or against the quoted price and/or as specified, USAf must be given immediate written notice to this effect. In instances of non-compliance with certain sections of the contract by the service provider, USAf reserves the right to terminate the agreement.

24.5. Pricing

24.5.1. All prices must be in South African Rand value and must be inclusive of VAT. Fees will be payable in South African Rands on satisfactory completion of the assignment.

24.6. Client Base

24.6.1. Service providers must have specific experience in the delivery of the required service. They must submit at least recent references or a client base reflecting the entity where a similar service was rendered, the duration, the project value, the date, and whether the project was successful. USAf reserves the right to contact references during the evaluation and adjudication process to obtain confirmation.

24.7. Company Profile, Financial Information and BEE Shareholding

24.7.1. The company's profile, together with the BEE certification, is mandatory.

24.8. Registrations

24.8.1. Proof of company registration must be submitted in the form of copies of the relevant registration documents. e.g. CC/CK, Pty (Ltd). It is the service provider's responsibility to ensure that their Cipro annual returns are in order and that the registration remains valid throughout the contract tenure.

24.9. Tax Pin Certificate

24.9.1. An original and valid tax pin certificate issued by the South African Revenue Service certifying that the taxes of the service provider are in order must be submitted before the closing date and time. It is the service provider's responsibility to ensure that their

SARS annual returns are in order and that the registration remains valid throughout the contract. Failure to do so will invalidate the proposal.

24.10. **Enquiries may be directed only in writing to:**

Ms Molatelo Motswe

Administrator: HELM

E-mail: molatelo@helm.ac.za