

From the Administrator's Desk

Dear MUT Staff, Students and all relevant stakeholders

I would like to first wish all of you a happy New Year. I hope you had a good rest.

May all your aspirations be realised in 2023.

Following my appointment as Administrator and my subsequent introduction to the University community in October last year, that last quarter of the year was devoted to:

- Attending to the urgent business of Council, which included the processing of certain statutory reporting for that time of the year;
- Addressing emergency situations that required my attention;
- Initiating some of the projects specified or implied in the terms of reference for my appointment; and
- Most importantly, getting into intense planning for the delivery of my mandate as contained in the terms of reference for my appointment.

As we start the year, I remain humbled by the trust that the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, as well as the University community have placed in me by allowing me to serve in the role of Administrator for the University. I am invigorated and look forward to holding hands with the rest of you to take this great University to even greater heights.

I believe strongly that clear and constant communication is the glue that will keep us walking the same path through the period of Administration. To facilitate this constant communication, I have, with the assistance of the University's Marketing and Communications Department, adopted a Communication Plan: "During the tenure of the Administrator". The Plan outlines several approaches and various media that will be used to ensure that the University community is kept abreast of my work within the University and, where appropriate, they will also have the avenues to communicate on matters related to my work within the University.

This format of the communication that you are consuming right now, titled:

"From the Administrator's Desk", will be a regular publication providing an update on the work of the Administrator every quarter.

You will, from time to time, receive notifications of other content and media - as per the Communication Plan. ▶▶▶



Professor Lourens Van Staden

This edition is dedicated to ensuring that we are all on the same page regarding my role at the University and that we can speak with one voice in that regard.

Drawing on the Terms of Reference (ToR) issued in the Government Gazette of 10 December 2022, my role is to:

1. Take over the role, powers, functions, and duties of the MUT Council for a period of 24 months.
2. Identify and initiate processes and initiatives that will restore proper governance and management at the University.
3. Initiate an independent external investigation (a forensic audit) into the range of financial control weaknesses and suspected financial irregularities as a matter of urgency.
4. Further, where criminal activity is evident, full legal processes must follow so that there is visible consequence management for illicit practice.
5. Develop and begin the implementation of a five-year development plan that will address the range of problems and challenges that have been identified in all the Independent Assessor reports and the CHE's institutional audit reports.
6. Take responsibility for the appointment and for the filling of senior-level posts including that of the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, within 12-18 months of the term of office of the Administrator.
7. Review the senior appointments made in 2022 to ensure that the institutional statute and all applicable policies were strictly adhered to. Further to this, the Administrator must ensure that there are necessary employment probity assessments for new management recruits.
8. Ensure that a new Council is constituted in accordance with the institutional statute as soon as is practicable; and that there is a proper induction of all members and an effective handover of the governance role to the new Council. The recommendation of a probity assessment for potential members of the Council must be followed through.

Delineation of my role

PART A: IN COMES THE TECHNICAL TEAM

- To ensure that I deliver the best for the University, the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation has approved the appointment of the following individuals to assist me:
 - Dr Dhaya Naido
 - Paul Slack
 - Moretlo Mokuele
- These three individuals are seasoned professionals and have immense experience in higher education management and governance. Their contribution will surely add tremendous value to my work and to the University.
- Collectively, they are referred to as the Administrator's Technical Team and will be walking the corridors of the University from time to time.

PART B: WHAT THE TERMS OF REFERENCE PROVIDE FOR

- While, in many cases, Administrators have been appointed to take over the roles of both Council and Executive Management, I have been appointed to primarily take over the role of Council.
- The Executive Management and the Executive Management Committee remain intact and continue to fulfil the roles they were fulfilling before my appointment.
- Now comes another dynamic: there are additional roles assigned to me in addition to taking over the role of Council.
 - The execution of these additional roles has the potential of creating confusion as they will require my Technical Team and I to go beyond just performing the role of Council and to engage with some staff and different managers directly.
 - My Technical Team and I will develop appropriate communication mechanisms to eliminate any confusion and ensure that relations are properly managed as the work is executed.

PART C: ATTENDING TO THE EXPECTATIONS THAT ARE NOT DIRECTLY CATERED FOR IN THE TERMS OF REFERENCE:

The appointment of an Administrator has the potential to create an impression that he/she is at the University to have an ear for every complaint and solve all challenges and 'ills' that may exist within the University.



Truth is that, especially given the limitation to the role of Council attached to my appointment, all the systems of the University are still expected to serve the needs of staff, students, and stakeholders that they were established to serve.

This, notwithstanding, it may well be that the University community may feel let down by the systems they had expected would serve them.

Since the laws of the country and the policies of the University may still direct that matters (even of dissatisfaction) be handled only by following the very systems the University community might have lost confidence in, the first challenge we need to tackle together is to restore the confidence in the systems that were established to serve you.

First in line for restoration: REPORTING HOTLINE

By this time, it is very clear to me as the Administrator that the University needs to restore its Reporting Hotline so that there is a credible and reliable avenue where staff, students and members of the community can report suspected acts of corruption, fraud, mismanagement and other illegal activities. My Technical Team and I are engaging the appropriate offices within the University in this regard and will give you an update in this regard in the next Issue of this publication.

In conclusion:

It is my fervent hope that my presence at MUT will make a difference and that we may all partner for the betterment of this University.

The next Issue of this publication will give more insights into the work plans that my team and I are currently finalizing.

Until then

Professor Lourens Van Staden
MUT Administrator
23 January 2023