

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNERSHIPS STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY
PLUS PROGRAMME
NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (LEVEL 3, 4 & 5)**

1. Background

The Skills Development Act (Act no. 97 of 1998) as well as the Skills Development Levies Act (Act no. 9 of 1999) compels Stellenbosch University to pay a skills levy of 1% of the institution's salary bill to the Department of Labour. Should the University be in a position to prove that staff skills development is indeed taking place, part of the levy becomes recoverable in the form of grants. Very strict guidelines placing a greater emphasis on learnerships are embodied in the new NSA (National Skills Authority) strategy that was made public during March 2005.

Learnerships are formal one-year national certificate courses on levels 3 to 5 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and form part of the National Skills Development Strategy.

Stellenbosch University decided from 2006 onwards to ensure that administrative and management personnel are granted opportunities to obtain these formal qualifications and to this end has developed the PLUS (Professional Learnerships University Stellenbosch) programme. Stellenbosch University employees will thus annually be afforded the opportunity to participate in the PLUS programme by being nominated and selected to participate.

The PLUS programme will be coordinated and managed by the Human Resource section.

2. Aim

- The aim of the PLUS programme is utilise learnerships to enhance skills levels among Stellenbosch University personnel on administrative, secretarial and managerial levels.
- The PLUS programme empowers personnel to the extent that they can obtain the necessary competencies to function within the South African context.
- The PLUS programme ensures that Stellenbosch University can indeed meet the challenges in the administrative domain that are created by the ever transforming world of work.
- The PLUS programme provides opportunities to personnel on especially the lower levels to obtain formal qualifications that will stand them in good stead in all sectors of the economy.
- The PLUS programme furthermore also ensures that Stellenbosch University complies with the Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998) in that the

University is addressing the shortage of knowledge and skills prevalent in South Africa.

- The programme also ensures that the development opportunities offered to staff at SU are of value and that the funds so spent assure a return on investment (ROI). This in turn leads to increased productivity, greater flexibility of the workforce, heightened motivation among personnel and an enhanced quality of work produced.

3. Learnerships

A learnership is a formal qualification that combines work experience with structured learning.

Learnerships consist of different modules. The modules in turn are made up of skills programmes which consist of one or more unit standards. Each module defines the necessary skills and competencies required of learners at the time of their assessment. Each learnership carries a weight of 120 to 140 credits as is required of a formal qualification.

Assessment requires that learners demonstrate their acquired knowledge and level of competence, as well as their attitudes through practical application.

Learner support is offered on a continuous basis from the recruitment phase up to final certification. It includes how learners should engage with course material, how assignments should be done, effective planning of studies and how to prepare for tests and examinations.

Each learner is assigned a mentor that will be trained in tutoring and mentor skills. This training can be effected on two levels, namely basic training that spans half a day, or such persons can enrol for the course that carries formal credits. The provider also offers the learner a further measure of support in the form of a dialogue facility as well as telephone, e-mail and portfolio support. After each training intervention, a report is written on each learner and the information is captured on the learner database. Information pertaining to the progress of each learner is at the immediate disposal of the coordinator of the PLUS programme who is then at liberty to do quality assurance. This information is also made available to the mentors concerned as well as to managers.

Learnerships are developed and managed in accordance with government's prescribed method. It consists of, among others:

- Making available training and support material such as assessment guidelines, handouts and additional reading.
- Personal training that is the equivalent of 33% of the learnership.
- Support for mentorship programmes in the workplace.
- Assessment and an opportunity for learners to acquire further information to ensure that their competencies are evaluated.

- Moderation and verification of assessment results.
- Certification of learners.
- Keeping learner records as part of the Learner Management System.
- Quality assurance as part of the SETA requirements.

Learners and mentors are given continuous support and guidelines throughout the process, from selection to final certification.

The primary accreditation of these learnerships is within the ETDP SETA. The main accreditation falls within the Services SETA. The training is generic and complies with the Memorandum of Understanding between SETAs.

Learners will spend two to three days a month at the training institute and practical work experience will be acquired in the workplace for the rest of the month. Credits will be earned as follows:

- through workplace assessment – 70%
- through structured training – 30%

Although training is mainly classroom based, it will include lectures, activities, role play and a variety of assessments. Work-based training will be done in actual practical business situations and the emphasis will be on day-to-day knowledge and skills needed by the various learnerships. Learners are required to participate and become involved in these activities.

4. Extent of the PLUS programme project

- The training is directed at the Department of Labour's registered learnerships.
- The training is outcomes based with National Qualifications Framework unit standards incorporating learnership credits.
- Learner credits are registered on the National Learner Record Database.
- The training service provider has full accreditation with the relevant SETAs (ETDP and Services) and meets the quality requirements needed for certification purposes.
- It is a one-year (12 months) training contract.
- The learnerships are aimed at personnel at Stellenbosch University on levels 3 to 5 of the National Qualifications Framework.
- Training of work environment mentors with regard to coaching and mentorship skills also forms part of the PLUS programme project.

5. Available Learnerships

The PLUS programme gives recognition to prior learning acquired during years of work. The programme supports the new skills development approach to obtaining qualifications, namely the development of a portfolio of evidence. The PLUS programme is based on two to three days training a month for ten modules consisting of two to three unit standards each.

The PLUS programme has as its particular focus the practical application of that which learners have learnt in their current working situation. Modules are adjusted in such a way that they can be applied in a meaningful way in the Stellenbosch University working environment. The proof that learning which had taken place had indeed been successfully and effectively transferred to the work environment is continually evaluated and monitored.

Learners are provided with standardised documents and best practice templates which are in line with the University's policies and procedures. Guidelines pertaining to learners' portfolio of evidence are also provided. Learner progress and performance are continually monitored and are recorded on the training provider's learner management system.

Project management meetings between the service provider and Stellenbosch University furthermore ensure that learnerships are effectively executed.

Since 2006 Stellenbosch University has given its personnel the opportunity to participate in the following learnerships as part of the PLUS programme:

- 5.1 Secretarial and administrative work – NQF 3
- 5.2 Team leader – NQF 3
- 5.3 Secretarial and administrative work – NQF 4
- 5.4 Supervisor – NQF 4
- 5.5 Manager – NQF 5

5.1 Secretarial and administrative work – National Qualifications Framework (NQF level 3)

The need for a learnership that focuses on the generic aspects of secretarial and administrative work is of extreme importance particularly if one takes into account that learners may find themselves in a wide array of work places and that they have to have the assurance that the qualification will be recognised.

The skills thus acquired can be transferred without any adjustment to other economic sectors. Learners will be able to make a choice for specialisation in reception, secretarial/administrative or personal/executive assistant depending on the work that they do. Successful learners will receive the **National Certificate in Generic Business Administration NQF level 3.**

Learners will be able to fill positions such as receptionist, administrative assistant, personal assistant, secretary, and clerk, and they will be able to do so in the workplace in any economic sector.

The formal qualification consists of a minimum of 120 credits. Thirty-seven of these credits are for fundamental competencies (compulsory); 64 credits are for core competencies (compulsory) and 32 credits go to elective competencies from which a minimum of 19 credits must be selected.

5.2 Team leader – National Qualifications Framework (NQF level 3)

This learnership developed from the need to increase skills among personnel who should fulfil basic functions of team leaders within any economic sector. It was furthermore necessary to standardise this level irrespective of the different workplaces.

The skills thus acquired can be transferred without any adjustment to other economic sectors. Successful learners will receive the **National Certificate in Generic Management NQF level 3**.

Learners can fill posts such as that of team leaders, supervisors, and shift leaders. They can fill such positions within the workplace in any economic sector. It is an entry level qualification and is open to anyone.

The formal qualification consists of a minimum of 120 credits of which 33 credits are for fundamental competencies (compulsory); 59 credits are for core competencies (compulsory) and 53 credits for elective competencies from which a minimum of 28 credits must be selected.

5.3 Secretarial and administrative work National Qualifications Framework (NQF level 4)

This learnership developed from the need to increase the skills levels of persons in support functions in secretarial and administrative fields. The skills thus acquired can be transferred without any adjustment to other economic sectors.

Learners will be able to choose to specialise in reception, executive administration, financial literacy, relationship management, legal aspects, communication, project administration and support, help centre administration and human resources. Successful learners will receive the **National Certificate in Business Administration NQF level 4**.

Learners will be able to fill posts such as that of receptionist, secretary, administrative assistant, administrative controller, personal assistant, and executive assistant in any workplace within any economic sector.

The formal qualification consists of a minimum of 140 credits of which 54 credits are for fundamental competencies (compulsory); 76 credits for core competencies (compulsory) and 147 credits for elective competencies from which a minimum of 10 can be selected.

5.4 Supervisor – National Qualifications Framework (NQF level 4)

This learnership developed from the need to increase the skills levels of persons who fulfil supervisory functions within the full spectrum of all economic sectors.

The need for a learnership that addresses the generic components of supervision of persons is extremely important particularly if one takes into account that learners find themselves in an array of workplaces and that they need to have the assurance that the qualification will be recognised.

The skills thus acquired can be transferred without any adjustment to other economic sectors. Successful learners will receive the **National Certificate in Generic Management NQF level 4**.

Learners can fill posts such as that of supervisor and head of department within the workplace in any economic sector.

The formal qualification consists of a minimum of 140 credits of which 49 credits are for fundamental competencies (compulsory); 63 credits are for core competencies (compulsory) and 92 credits for elective competencies from which a minimum of 28 must be selected.

5.5 Management – National Qualifications Framework (NQF level 5)

The National Certificate in Management is a formal qualification on level 5 of the NQF. It is applicable to persons in management positions across the spectrum of economic sectors. The qualification is aimed at supervisors, junior managers and even middle management. The certificate equips learners with the necessary competencies, enabling them for management roles within any economic sector.

The aim of the qualification is to enhance general management competencies, thus enabling managers to:

- Strive for excellence and best practices in any organisation.

- Comply with all legal requirements and environmental factors that influence both team and organisation.
- Satisfy the need for change within a diverse working environment.
- Ensure interaction and sound communication with all role players.
- Apply basic principles of sound planning, organising, leading teams, environments and departments.
- Solve problems in a creative and innovative manner to the benefit of the organisation.
- Think strategically with regard to forecasting, planning and marketing.
- Use information and systems effectively and appropriately.
- Demonstrate financial awareness with regard to attaining organisational goals.

The extent of this qualification is such that it should preferably be completed over a period of two years. It is on NQF level 5 which is the equivalent of a first year at university. The full qualification is the equivalent of 120 credits which in turn is equal to one full year of study. If it is thus taken into account that learners are persons who are in fulltime employ, then it is in all probability more sensible to complete 60 credits a year.

5.6 Mentorship training

Those persons who are appointed as mentors to learners will be subjected to a half day training session. There will however also be an opportunity for such persons to attend the formal National Qualifications Framework level 4 training which consists of 5 credits.

5.6.1 Mentorship training – Half day training session:

- Induction with regard to training interventions
- Obtaining information about the benefits and outcomes of learnerships
- An overview of the new approach to qualifications

5.6.2 Mentorship training – NQF level 4 (5 credits) – One day plus an additional half day as stated above:

- How to prepare in order to help and support learners
- Mentorship guidelines and mentorship support
- Keeping workplace records and evidence
- The preparation and scrutiny of portfolios of evidence

6. Nomination procedure

- All PLUS programme communication will be disseminated by the Human Resources Department to GMC members who will in turn pass it on to eligible personnel. The information will also be made available on the home page of the Human Resources Department.
- Personnel who qualify for learnerships or personnel who have indicated it as part of their personal development plans (PDPs) may be nominated for specific learnerships by heads of areas.
- The appointed learnership provider will conduct information sessions for potential learners. During such sessions personnel will be evaluated and consulted to ensure the correct apportionment regarding level of learnership.
- A panel is responsible for final approval and acceptance of nominations. The panel will consist of the senior director of Human Resources, the SU skills development facilitator (SDF) and five nominated members of the training forum. The selection will be handled on the basis of pre-approved criteria.
- The number of learners will also be evaluated against the availability of funds.
- Learners who have been approved, as well as their heads will be informed. Mentors will be allocated to successful learners. If necessary, mentors too will receive the necessary training. Candidates who have been unsuccessful will be notified and reasons will be given.
- Each learner as well as mentors will sign a commitment agreement. This agreement will compel learners and mentors as well as their managers to be fully committed to the PLUS programme. Costs incurred by Stellenbosch University, especially additional costs such as re-evaluations, can and will be recovered from the individuals involved should a learner be unsuccessful.
- The appointed provider shall host an induction session for all successful candidates two days before the official start of the PLUS programme. At such session all processes and requirements will be fully explained and learners will be given with the necessary documentation. Mentors who participate in the PLUS programme will also be invited to attend the session.

7. Accredited Training Provider

The PLUS programme will be presented by external providers. Siyathembana will perform this role up to and including such time as deemed necessary to revisit the decision.

- Siyathembana is fully accredited as a provider by both ETDP and SETA
- Siyathembana is also accredited by the W&R SETA.

8. Requirements

- Each learner must complete the national standard.

- Each learner must attend and successfully complete the classroom and work activities as well as all assignments.
- Each learner must successfully complete research assignments.
- A Portfolio of Evidence consisting of observations, tests of knowledge, supporting evidence (natural evidence from the workplace) with cross reference systems (provide templates).
- Each learner should have a mentor who will be selected and trained.

9. General

- PLUS programme costs will be recovered from levies received back from the ETDP skills levy. Further funding will be sourced from the National Skills fund.
- R300 000 will be budgeted for the PLUS programme for 2006. It will be annually adjusted on the basis of need.
- Costs per person amount to R16 000 per learnership. The amount includes the work sessions two to three days a month as well as all the necessary support and assessment.
- Stellenbosch University can also apply for additional discretionary funding from the ETDP SETA.
- The PLUS programme will be offered in Stellenbosch depending on the size of the group. Individuals might be expected to attend sessions that are offered at some of the other training facilities.
- The PLUS programme will be conducted mainly, but not exclusively so in Afrikaans.
- Siyathembana (as mentioned under point 7) will conduct the PLUS programme.
- The PLUS programme constitutes two days a month of formal full-day compulsory sessions.
- The programme stretches the duration of a year and final certification takes place the following year.
- An annual certification ceremony will be held for successful candidates.

10. Conclusion

To comply with the Skills Development Act, it is imperative that SU management consider the proposal with regard to the PLUS programme, as well as provide its full support for all the required interventions.