

Strategic Cluster 2: New Frontiers in Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development

Guidelines for applicants (Staff and postgraduate students) September 2011 for the 2012 financial year

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Please feel free to contact Doreen for guidance on your research proposal.

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A. New Frontiers in Sustainable Development and Poverty Alleviation

The Research Cluster on Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development offers a valuable opportunity for interdisciplinary research on a wide variety of development-related topics. Developing countries face numerous challenges of low levels of human development and high levels of poverty and deprivation. In the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA), this cluster seeks to provide a research portal for trans-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary and disciplinary research to address these critical issues. It is the aim of this cluster to seek out new frontiers and perspectives on poverty reduction and sustainable development, as a means to promote the asset base of people, their livelihoods, their empowerment, and their quality of life. This cluster will predominantly focus on the non-metropole areas of South Africa.

Our research includes quantitative, qualitative, and normative research. It will promote practical outcomes and impacts, by means of a 'scholarship of engagement', in the sense of being policy-relevant, practice-oriented, problem-solving, empowering and collaborative. Research will be relevant and responsive to the needs of practitioners and stakeholders. Our research will be closely integrated with all aspects of the policy 'cycle', including status quo analysis, policy and programme design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

This Cluster will pose new questions in terms of conceptual definitions, unintended consequences, good and bad practice, policy dilemmas, and choices of resource allocation. The concepts of holistic and integrated development will be critically unpacked and investigated, to highlight neglected dimensions of human and community development. Specifically, issues of human wellness, quality of life, and cultures of poverty will be explored.

The Research Cluster will promote international linkages and exchanges, in order to situate our work in the context of international debates.

B. What is the focus of this Cluster?

Not surprisingly, given the subject matter of "sustainable development", there is an ongoing debate surrounding the proper focus of the Cluster. There are two dynamics at play: Some scholars at UFS would like to widen the focus of the Cluster, on the grounds that sustainable development includes almost every aspect of society. In contrast, other researchers argue that UFS should choose a few select areas, particularly those which are already strong at UFS, so that our international reputation for excellence can be promoted in specific focus areas.

This debate is likely to continue for as long as there is a Cluster on Sustainable Development, because of the deeply normative and judgement-laden nature of the subject. Such debates are to be welcomed, to prevent us lapsing into premature rigidity.

The demise of the Transformation Cluster has also required us to broaden the scope of the Cluster on Sustainable Development.

However, some kind of focus has to be identified and promoted. This will fall between the more extreme positions outlined above. The following guidelines suggest *substantive* (the subject matter) and *procedural* guidelines (the way the Cluster is run).

(a) Substantive guidelines

In general, the Cluster works with all Faculties and Departments, as long as the focus of research is some kind of “sustainable development” or “poverty alleviation”.

Where empirical work is involved, we encourage (but do not require) involvement in specific communities, which have been designated as “Knowledge Hubs” (where collaboration between local stakeholders and UFS is specifically promoted). See more detail below.

For 2012, our approach will be the following:

1. Disciplines

All disciplines will be encouraged to participate in the Cluster. This is the essence of interdisciplinary research. In fact, proposals will be *encouraged* to include at least two disciplines within a partnership. It is of the nature of the subject that development problems have a myriad dimensions, and often unexpected issues cause development initiatives to fail.

2. Actively promoting interdisciplinary work

The international literature on sustainable development is emphatic that development cuts across typical university disciplines. This is a major factor in generating new research insights.

Consequently, applications will not be considered if at least two university departments are not involved.

We suggest that, if you would like to submit an application, consult with the Cluster, or with your research peers, to find a collaborator within another discipline.

3. Policy Sectors

The Cluster needs to position itself as a Think Tank for social policy in the Free State, Northern Cape and central South African hinterland. This would be the only social policy Think Tank located in the central areas of South Africa, and would fill an important intellectual vacuum. The policy relevance of topics will be considered when evaluating proposals.

UFS already has a good research track record in certain key policy areas, viz.

Local Economic Development,
Housing,
Health, (particularly HIV/AIDS),
Agriculture,
Water, and
Food/Nutrition.

(In the case of Agriculture and Water, there are other Clusters covering these themes, but we encourage our cluster researchers to work with those clusters, to promote interdisciplinary research).

There are also new sectoral focus areas developing, such as Tourism, the Informal Sector, Game Farming, Mining and Transport. We need to be cautious not to multiply these sectors too much, and therefore there is an onus on the applicant to show that a relatively new sector has the potential for longer-term specialisation at UFS. For example, the argument would be strengthened if there is a likelihood that postgraduate students, intellectual networks with other universities, or third-stream funding can be obtained for such a new sectoral focus.

In general, when a researcher applies for Cluster funding, we would give specific recognition if their application fits into our “strong” sectors. However, a case can always be made to initiate or build a new sectoral focus, especially if it is initially linked to one of the existing strong sectors. For example, a focus on Housing may be extended to include a focus on Urban Environmental Management, Small Towns or City Management, particularly in the light of national and international development trends or policy debates. Once again, the case for such an extension of focus should be argued by the applicant.

A sector-specific focus takes a long time to build, and researchers should be prepared to contribute to, or to initiate, a long-term commitment to a specific developmental question.

It is worth noting that the Cluster submitted a proposal for a SA Research Chair Initiative (SARCHI) research professorship, on the topic of rural-urban linkages and regional development. This is a very multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary topic, and should offer a great deal of scope for applicants.

4. Cross-cutting themes

Several researchers are focusing on “transversal” themes which cut across disciplines or policy sectors. themes, but there is always room to argue for either an expansion of an existing theme, or for a new theme, particularly in the light of international intellectual trends.

Existing cross-cutting themes are:

1. The “knowledge economy” – how universities promote local and regional development
2. Institutional capacity-building (e.g. municipalities and provincial government, or NGOs)

3. Leadership development
4. Impacts on policy design
5. Arid areas development (Karoo, Kalahari, Namaqualand)
6. The proposed Montane Research Institute on the QwaQwa campus (mountain biodiversity, water, agriculture, tourism, and communities).

5. Regional focus

The University of the Free State serves a economically deprived, largely rural and semi-arid hinterland in central South Africa. Cities such as Bloemfontein and Kimberley are very important in this region, but do not match the economic momentum of the large metropolises. This rural hinterland stretches from Sasolburg in the north to Beaufort West in the south-west, the eastern Cape Karoo in the south-east, and from Lesotho in the east to the Atlantic Coast.

Our region has huge economic potential, but this often remains undeveloped. Compared to Gauteng (with three major universities), Cape Town (also with three major universities), the Eastern Cape (with four universities), and KwaZulu-Natal (with one major universities based on three strong campuses), Central South Africa remains underserved in terms of research funding and capacity.

UFS has built up major research capacity in the other Clusters, viz Water Management, Agriculture in Semi-Arid Areas (see www.aridareas.co.za, Biotechnology, and Nanotechnology. Our Cluster's primarily role is to focus on the "missing link", i.e. the social and economic realities which affect the Central South Africa, and which often profoundly affect progress in the subject-matter covered by the other research clusters (e.g. the social aspects of Conservation Agriculture).

Central South Africa also remains the primary recruiting-ground for UFS students, who can therefore be usefully channelled into postgraduate research on localities with which they are familiar.

Furthermore, there is a strong demand for our research outputs, particularly from the Free State and Northern Cape Provincial Governments. The UFS is favourably placed within easy reach of both provincial capitals. This gives UFS an opportunity to influence regional development policies to a much greater extent than in other provinces.

Consequently, applications which are based in central South Africa will be strongly favoured. Where there is a strong argument for doing research outside central South Africa, we will encourage a comparative study between such a region and the central hinterland. Alternatively, the policy or developmental implications of such work for the central region should be argued (e.g. climate change management in Gauteng may be useful for climate change management in the Free State).

6. Locality focus

We are experimenting with the concept of “knowledge hubs”. These are specific localities with the following features:

A strong local network of organisations, who have expressed a need or desire for research, and who want to build a long-term relationship with UFS

Preferably an area where the municipality shows an interest in and commitment to research-based policy-making and implementation

Local developmental issues which are intellectually significant, and have potential for influencing policy debates elsewhere in Central South Africa, or nationally and internationally

A strong driver or champion within UFS, who has built up a relationship with that community, particularly through previous research and facilitation activities

A locality which has policy significance for provincial governments, and which can therefore harness provincial interest and funding.

In these localities, several dimensions of sustainable development will be tested:

Interdisciplinary research, contributing to development insights within a single locality

A **long-term** research commitment by UFS (at least five years, but preferably a decade). Specific research projects should ideally last at least 2 years in a locality.

Promoting regular and meaningful **dissemination** of our research outputs (articles, reports and theses).

Promoting the impact of research on local **decision-making**, political dynamics and programme implementation, and thereby building leadership. This will contribute to creating UFS-community **partnerships**.

Assessing the longer-term **impact** of research on local development, and therefore contributing to our Monitoring and Evaluation skills (which contributes to our focus area on Knowledge Management).

Creating a friendly environment for postgraduate researchers, particularly students, which can lead to a greater degree of **experimentation** with development ideas

Promoting **community service learning**, in partnership with research, to promote the feedback loop into teaching.

Promoting **recruitment** of talented potential students for UFS, who may return to their communities, and therefore contributing to a “knowledge cycle” of learning, research and community empowerment.

Currently, the following Knowledge Hubs are being developed:

1. Dihlabeng Local Municipality (Bethlehem, Clarens, Fouriesburg), in the eastern Free State, on the basis of developments in tourism and agriculture, and proximity to our QwaQwa campus
2. Maluti-a-Phofung Local Municipality (Harrismith, Phuthaditjhaba – where the QwaQwa campus is located, and with obvious linkages to a proposed Montane Research Institute)
3. Camdeboo Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape Karoo, as well as the Sneeuberg, based on heritage tourism, architecture, eco-tourism, arid areas development, and water management.

4. Bloemfontein (Mangaung Local Municipality), with a potentially key role for Lengau and Paradys farms (which are owned and managed by UFS as experimental farms)
5. Southern Free State: Gariep Dam (based on water and tourism issues) and its hinterland (Philippolis, where UFS has a strong language translation project) and Jagersfontein (where a new mine is located).
6. Kareeberg and Karoo-Hoogland Local Municipalities (Carnarvon, Williston, Sutherland) in the Northern Cape, on the basis of the multi-billion rand Square Kilometer Array (SKA) project, and previous research by the Centre for Development Support
7. Prince Albert and Beaufort West in the Karoo, based on tourism, fruit production (e.g. olives), montane development (the Swartberg) and transport systems.
8. Potentially, Welkom in the Goldfields.
9. Potentially, Dealesville, based on thorough work by the Department of Urban and Regional planning.

Additional localities can be considered in future, on the basis of significant research effort and investment by UFS. UFS researchers are welcome to argue the case for additional localities, based on a sufficient “critical mass” of previous research involvement.

This does not mean that all applications have to study development within these identified localities. But we would appreciate participation, from as wide a range of disciplines as possible, in these localities.

7. Partnerships

The Cluster is based on the fundamental principle that its outputs must be relevant to both the academic and non-academic communities. In particular, governmental and social stakeholders need to be made aware of research conducted by the UFS, so that such research outputs can be utilised in practice. But this principle goes even further: It argues for a “scholarship of engagement”, whereby linkages with practitioners are built into the very heart of academic activities. This requires the Cluster to be pro-active in listening to the needs of non-academic stakeholders, and to be responsive to them when designing research topics and methodologies.

(b) Procedural or institutional requirements

Previous progress reports: If staff applicants received funding in 2011, proposals for 2012 will not be considered if a 2011 progress report has not been submitted.

Initial consultation: Researchers are encouraged to discuss their potential projects with the Cluster, to identify synergies, themes and potential partners at an early stage.

Progress evaluation:

Proposals need to consider the desirable **outcomes** listed in our progress report format. You need to build these outcomes into your proposal.

Have you presented your work at any conferences or workshops? If so, which?
Are any of your work components ready or almost ready for submission for publication? If so, which components and for which journals will it be submitted?
Have any papers been accepted for publication?
Are there any components or drafts which can be published as CDS reports?
Are there any obstacles delaying completion?
Do you have students assisting you on the project? If so, please list their name and course/level . Indicate when they will graduate.
Did you create or maintain links with non-UFS organizations?
Did you create or maintain with international organizations?
Did you raise other funds for the project?
What are your future plans for this project? Do you believe that it will expand at UFS, as a research initiative?

A progress report must be submitted by September 2012.

The Cluster requires grant-holders to comply with the following, during the 2012 year:

1. Publications

Grant-holders are required to produce published papers in academic journals, as follows:

- Masters level: 1 article per annum
- Doctoral level: 2 articles per annum
- Post-doctoral: 2 articles per annum
- Research fellow: 1-2 articles per annum (depending on the size of the grant).

The Journal of Development Support, housed in the Centre for Development Support (CDS), is one useful channel for submitting papers for publication. Submission to other accredited journals is also welcomed.

2. Working papers

Where possible, versions of final reports should be submitted to their Host Departments or to CDS, for publication as Working Papers, Policy Briefs or Research Briefs. These will also be placed on a Cluster website. These reports could be earlier or longer versions of published academic articles.

3. Seminar participation

Because developmental issues are typically multi-faceted, the Cluster would like to promote a spirit of interdisciplinary collegiality. Grant recipients will be required to present their work

at two seminars per annum, based in their host Departments, or within the Centre for Development Support. The first seminar will focus on methodology, while the second seminar will enable grant-holders to present preliminary findings.

We encourage grantholders to attend all seminars, which are likely to be held on a monthly basis.

Non-university stakeholders will be welcome to attend these seminars.

The seminars will play an important role in identifying interdisciplinary issues and possible partnerships, for future research projects.

4. Graduate student supervision

Applications for postgraduate bursaries will be particularly welcome if co-supervisors are appointed from different academic departments. This will promote the principle of interdisciplinary research.

C. Focus Areas

The Cluster contains four Focus Areas, which are all based on the available assets, capabilities and resources of individuals and communities, including natural, physical, financial, social and personal assets:

- Focus area 1: Health and Wellness, including poverty and community resilience.
- Focus area 2: Local Economic Development (including the informal sector, tourism, municipal governance and regional development)
- Focus area 3: Human settlements
- Focus area 4: Rural development and agrarian change (including land reform, emergent farmers, game farming, and “living landscapes”)

Focus area 1: Health and Wellness, including poverty and community resilience

Background questions:

1. Why is SA faring so poorly on dealing with HIV and TB? What are the implications of poor nutrition, lifestyle diseases (e.g. eating patterns) and lifestyle practices (e.g. sexual practices)? How is this associated with changing food production practices?
2. How can the effectiveness of caregivers at the front-line of service delivery be improved? What is the ethos of the public bureaucracy?
3. Why is this associated with relatively poor uptake of health services by vulnerable groups, such as the youth? What determines clients' responses to public programmes? (e.g. young women needing abortions; young people needing HIV support, people needing TB support). For example, what does a problem such as

teenage pregnancy reveal about the underlying social dynamics in a community, in schools, and in health and welfare services? These dynamics could include: Peer groups, family structures (e.g. single-parent families or child-headed households), social structures at schools, cultural values, and poverty levels. In turn, teenage pregnancy tends to lead to a new generation of poor people, because of poor parenting practices.

4. How can Government planning systems identify and address social and economic problems? In what ways can communities be meaningfully involved in development planning?
5. Project leaders and members: Prof Christo Heunis (Centre for Health Systems Research), Prof Corinna Walsh (Dietetics and Nutrition), Prof Henriette van den Bergh (Psychology), Prof Henriette van der Bergh (Department of Sociology), Prof Frikkie Booysen (Department of Economics), Dr Paulina van Zyl (Pharmacology), Mr Grey Magaiza (Sociology, QwaQwa campus), Ms Gladys Kigozi (Centre for Health Systems Research).

Focus area 2: Economic development

Stagnant economic development, high incidences of unemployment and poverty, as well as low human development indices and skills levels in numerous peripheral regions warrant research that concentrates on economic revitalisation in capacity and 'resource-poor environments', defined as areas that are lacking in economic assets, such as land, physical infrastructure, entrepreneurship, commercial finance and technical skills.

Why have so many Local Economic Development (LED) projects failed? What is the enabling role of government? How can it assist stakeholders such as business? How can people in the informal sector be most effectively empowered? How can we promote skills transfer, job creation, infrastructure, and poverty alleviation? Government's business is not to create jobs but to create an environment for business to create jobs. What would such an "enabling climate" entail? What are the relative interests of business and government? How can we build the economy where so many people are poor? Which sectors are the main drivers of the central South African economy? How can SA leverage its own advantages to exploit the African market?

The aim of this focus area will be to promote local development. This includes a strong emphasis on locality-based development in specific geographic environments, with their specific needs and problems. In accordance with the asset-based philosophy of this Strategic Cluster, this Focus Area will analyse local economic capabilities, and will concentrate on natural, physical and financial assets.

Key issues, in this cluster, are:

1. Business development: SMME support, local business development and promoting local economic multipliers; the socio-economic impact of tourism in remote and underdeveloped areas; the economic impact of local rates and tax policies;

2. Spatial issues: urbanisation and migration, rural-urban linkages, peri-urban development, transport systems in urban, rural and remote areas, regional development
3. Tourism.

Focus area leaders are Prof Doreen Atkinson and Ms Deidre van Rooyen (both at CDS).

Focus area 3: Liveable human settlements

Key questions, in this Focus Area, are the following:

- Housing policy: Why has housing policy in South Africa been so narrowly defined, and on occasion failed to meet its purposes?
- Social housing: What forms of “social housing” are possible? What are the implications of: (1) rental housing, (2) gap housing, (3) housing for young professionals, with mixed social services provided, (4) How replicable will it be? (5) What are the implications for intergovernmental relations? (6) Can it attract private companies to participate in the project?
- Housing and multi-functionality: How have working patterns in residential neighbourhoods changed? How does the informal sector work in middle class and poorer neighbourhoods? Is this a model for future cities? How do zoning regulations affect activities in neighbourhoods? Do municipalities have the right zoning powers, and do they use them effectively?
- Earth construction: What are the key advantages and obstacles in the social acceptability of earth construction as a viable alternative to mass-built contractor housing?
- Architecture, heritage and tourism: How can South African towns benefit from their architectural heritage, to promote inclusive tourism? In what ways can townships promote their tourism heritage, and link this with tourism development strategies?
- Second homes: What is the economic impact of the trend towards second-home ownership in South Africa? How many city dwellers are acquiring country homes? How many rural migrants are acquiring urban residences?

Key participants in this Focus Area include Mr Gerhard Bosman and Dr Diaan van der Westhuizen (Department of Architecture); Prof Verna Nel and colleagues from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning; and Ms Anita Venter and colleagues from the CDS.

Focus area 4: Rural development

How can relevant research be made available to rural communities and decision-makers?
How can development proposals be tailored to specific spatial regions?

The Focus Area has identified several key questions:

- Supporting emergent farmers: How can emergent farmers and beneficiaries of land reform programmes be assisted most effectively? This relates to issues of “pre-care” and “after-care” in land reform programmes, as well as municipal commonage projects.
- Family farms and industrial farming: How can systems of support be tailored more effectively to these different sectors?
- “Living landscapes”, rural planning and information systems: How can the UFS assist public agencies, such as municipalities, to construct Geographic Information Systems (GIS) with relevant planning data? What data should be collected for the GIS, to promote sustainable relationships between communities and the natural environment?
- What policies and programmes need to be put into place to assist farm workers’ development and progress?
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Key participants in this Focus area are:

- Rev Kiepie Jaftha, Agriculture Faculty
- Prof Basie Wessels, Agriculture Faculty
- Dr Geoffrey Mukwada, Geography Department, QwaQwa campus
- Mr Robert Alfonsi, Department of Computer Science, QwaQwa campus
- Dr Michael Cunningham, Department of Zoology, QwaQwa campus
- Ms Nontombi Velelo, Department of Sociology.

D. Funding guidelines

1. Cluster researchers (staff grants)

Generally, our focus is to enlarge the research capacity of the University, by encouraging new researchers to become involved.

The Cluster funds are limited by UFS research budgets and the need to involve more staff in research. Consequently, our funds must be used to lever additional funding. Cluster research grants should be regarded as “seed money”, in two specific senses:

- 1.1 An initial small grant to conduct preliminary research on a topic, which may lead to a major research focus in future (and to future counter-funding)
- 1.2 A relatively small grant which can leverage non-UFS funding. *The Cluster will endeavour to assist as much as possible, to obtain such counter-funding.* This is typically the case with more established projects.

There will be two funding tranches: In November and in March. Consequently, we hope to limit our grants in November, to accommodate additional researchers in March.

For 2012, Cluster grants will be allocated in three categories:

- Small: R20 000 or less, per annum
- Medium: R20-40 000 per annum
- Large: R40-60 000 per annum.

For larger grants, the requirement to raise counter-funding is of greater importance than for smaller grants (which are often at the incipient stage of research).

The Cluster will undertake to assist with raising counter-funding.

2. Post-graduate Students

The value of the bursaries are as follows:

1. Masters Degree Bursaries

Masters degree bursaries for full-time study are valued at R40 000 each annually, for 2 years, and bursaries for part-time study are valued at R12 000, for 3 years.

Smaller amounts may be made at the Committee's discretion.

The applicant should have achieved an Honours mark of not less than 70%.

The application should consist of a CV, and a research proposal of 500 words outlining the key themes of the research to be undertaken, how the proposed research will link with particular focus areas in the Strategic Research Cluster theme. It should have a supporting covering letter.

Funding in later years will depend on sufficient progress made. Milestones are set during the year, and subsequent funding tranches depends on milestones being met.

2. PhD bursaries

PhD degree bursaries are valued at R60 000 per annum (full-time) and R15 000 per annum (part-time).

Smaller amounts may be made available at the Committee's discretion.

The applicant will have completed his/her Masters Degree and have achieved a mark of not less than 70%.

The application should consist of a CV, and a research proposal of 1000 words outlining the key themes of the research to be undertaken, how the proposed research will link with particular focus areas in the Strategic Research Cluster theme. It should have a supporting covering letter.

3. Post-doctoral bursaries

Grants will be made available according to students' circumstances. Where funding permits, grants of up to R150 000 per annum will be allocated.

The applicant must be able to provide proof that they have satisfactorily fulfilled their University's requirements for a PhD at the time of application for an award. Those candidates not in possession of a PhD at the time of the application must be able to indicate that they will have done so within six months of applying for the fellowship.

The application should consist of a CV, and a research proposal of 5000 words outlining the key themes of the research to be undertaken, how the proposed research will link with particular focus areas in the Strategic Research Cluster theme. It should have a supporting covering letter.

For any queries, please contact the Cluster co-ordinator:

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Please feel free to contact Doreen for guidance on your research proposal.