



THE SOUTH AFRICAN TEACHING ADVANCEMENT AT UNIVERSITY (TAU) FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAMME 2018-2019

INFORMATION BROCHURE

The name of the programme

Tau is the Sesotho and Setswana word for lion, with all its connotations of strength, courage, leadership and even wisdom and protection. In addition, Tau is the Greek name for the letter T. Symbolically it is associated with life and resurrection / renewal. TAU is also the acronym for Teaching Advancement at University.

Aims of the TAU programme

- To contribute towards the enhancement of teaching and learning in higher education in South Africa by supporting the development of a cadre of academics across institutions and disciplines as scholars, leaders and mentors in their fields;
- To enhance the status and stature of teaching and popularise the understanding of teaching excellence in varied institutional and disciplinary settings.

Background to the programme

TAU is modelled on the highly successful Philadelphia-based Foundation for the Advancement of International Medical Education Research (FAIMER) programme - see <http://www.faimer.org/education/fellows/index.html>; and on the work of the South African branch of this programme, SAFRI.

TAU works with experienced academics who are recognised for teaching excellence, in order to build a cadre of teaching and learning leaders who could serve as role models and who could support the professional development of their colleagues within their department or institution. For this purpose, TAU provides an opportunity for high level engagement for approximately 50 participants from across South Africa, from all public universities and from a wide range of disciplines. Participants meet face-to-face in four short residential sessions interspersed across the 19 months of the programme, and between these sessions develop their collaboration

further by means of online communication and activities. TAU seeks to maximise participant involvement by regular group engagements with a wide range of topics and issues, and specifically through placing each participant in an enquiry group, which supports their work on individual and group projects. Each enquiry group is further supported by an advisor with considerable experience of educational development and the higher education system.

Content covered in the programme

The programme is structured in terms of the three TAU golden threads: deepening the understanding of teaching excellence in local contexts; the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL); and becoming a change agent. The contact sessions combine inputs around current pressing debates, group discussions and creative sessions, with time for participants to get to know each other, to reflect, and to work on their individual projects.

Session One (Sunday 21st January to Thursday 25th January 2018) will focus on the contextualisation of Higher Education in South Africa in 2018; the introduction of the TAU golden threads; developing an individual project proposal that can be used for ethical clearance; planning and generation of enquiry groups as learning communities; and strategies for working productively in an enquiry group online.

Sessions Two (Sunday 8th July to Wednesday 11th July 2018) and Three (Sunday 20th January to Wednesday 23rd January 2019) will focus on deepening engagement with participants' own projects; deepening collaboration; deepening understanding of SOTL and teaching excellence; and becoming a change agent.

Session Four (Sunday 7th July to Wednesday 10th July 2019) will focus on bringing projects to a close and reporting on them; and thinking about participants' own roles going forward.

Intended outcomes for applicants

- Critical reflection on own teaching practice, and on own teaching and learning context in relation to broader South African processes and issues;
- Formulation of appropriate action strategies in relation to teaching and learning challenges in own institutional setting;
- Becoming a catalyst for teaching change – networking, capacity building, leadership and advocacy;
- Design, implementation and evaluation of teaching and learning related development projects;
- Playing a leadership role within teaching and learning teams or processes.

Participant outputs

- Each participant is expected to work on an **individual project** over the full length of the programme. This project seeks to respond to a teaching and learning challenge identified by the participant in his/her own institutional environment; it might be a research project (such as Scholarship of Teaching and Learning), or a developmental project such as a new course or teaching materials, or leadership in development of a position paper or policy.

Participants are given guidance in developing the project proposal and in further deepening their understanding of the issue being investigated.

- By the end of March 2018 the finalised project proposal is submitted and can then be used to obtain institutional ethical clearance, if required in terms of the nature of the project.
- At the end of the full programme a report of approximately 10 pages on the project is submitted and is then placed on the TAU webpage (a template for this report will be supplied), and a short oral presentation is made. See <http://heltasa.org.za/projects/teaching-advancement-university-tau-fellowships-programme/> for examples of reports written during TAU 2015/2016.
- Each participant is expected to reflect regularly on his/her experience of TAU during the full length of the programme, and to submit a 4-page **reflective report** at the end of the programme, exploring the learning derived from TAU;
- Each participant is expected to contribute to a **poster** produced by his/her Enquiry Group. This presents a record of or sharing of the individual projects in each Enquiry Group.

What is expected of TAU Fellows

During the programme participants will be expected to:

- Attend four contact sessions (four / three days per session), as follows:
 - Contact session One: Sunday 21st January to Thursday 25th January 2018;
 - Contact session Two: Sunday 8th July to Wednesday 11th July 2018;
 - Contact session Three: Sunday 20th January to Wednesday 23rd January 2019;
 - Contact session Four: Sunday 7th July to Wednesday 10th July 2019.
- Participate on-line with members of the Enquiry Group and the advisor;
- Conduct a teaching-related seminar or workshop at their own institution – for instance on what they are learning from TAU; or on their individual project; and report on this during a contact session;
- Work on the individual project and communication with Enquiry Group members should involve three – four hours a week on average, through the course of the programme
- Produce the outputs detailed above.

After the programme participants will be expected to:

- Remain in contact with other TAU Fellows;
- Be available for inputs at national and regional teaching and learning events;
- Provide leadership and capacity building support in own university context.

By the very nature of the programme, TAU makes substantial demands on participants, and former participants have reported that they experienced considerable growth. However, if during the course of the programme a participant is clearly not making sufficient progress towards meeting the final TAU requirements, consideration may be given to withdrawing them from the programme.

Time required

Participants found that TAU involved a greater time commitment than many had envisaged. For instance, the individual project might require investment of a few hours per week. TAU participants need to be aware of this and able to accommodate these demands on their time.

Commitment

Considerable effort goes into making the programme a success, both on the part of the organisers and of the participants. Potential participants should consider carefully whether they would like to be nominated, as only two individuals per institution can be accommodated from the beginning of the process. Applicants who reconsider once the selection process has been finalised, effectively deny their university the possibility of having two candidates participating on the programme.

Former participants' experience of TAU

The TAU programme ran as a pilot during 2015-2016, and participants contributed to the extensive evaluation of the programme. The vast majority of participants (44 out of 48 respondents) found participation 'extremely worthwhile' (32), or 'worthwhile' (12).

This was further clarified in the reflective reports:

It has changed the way I view Higher Education, and I finally view myself as an academic and a professional.

... as individual I have started to critically question my perspectives and beliefs and ... started a transformative journey.

These discussions were a source of inspiration for me and incredibly valuable.

By suspending discipline, hierarchy, power relations, and spaces that usually frame my professional identity.... placed me in a different context premised on a commitment to effective and responsible teaching and learning in contemporary South Africa. This was a very liberating experience and eventually one of deep reflection and learning

Many participants found TAU extremely challenging, particularly at the outset, where they were introduced to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Participants spoke of 'the sense of arriving in another country'. TAU was 'a bit taxing on the nerves but at the same time became an incredibly affirming and liberating exercise'.

Participants found the involvement of colleagues from almost all other South African public universities particularly valuable, as this enabled them to network, to understand that many problems were shared, to learn from others' experiences, and overall to gain a broader perspective on higher education in South Africa. Closer partnerships were fostered especially through the enquiry groups, which in most cases built a strong sense of community which participants hope, and intend, will continue beyond the TAU programme. Some instances of inter-institutional collaboration have already been reported.



TAU 2015 – 2016 participants and advisors at the final session

Management of the TAU Fellowship Programme

The TAU Programme is managed under the leadership of Professor Brenda Leibowitz, Chair: Teaching and Learning at the University of Johannesburg, and with the assistance of the following representative Board:

- Prof Diane Grayson (Council on Higher Education)
- Prof Kasturi Behari-Leak (University of Cape Town; Heltasa Chair)
- Assoc Prof Jeff Jawitz (University of Cape Town)
- Prof Elizabeth de Kadt (University of Johannesburg)
- Prof Rubby Dunpath (University of KwaZulu-Natal)
- Dr Kwena Masha (University of Limpopo)
- Prof Vivienne Bozalek (University of the Western Cape)
- Dr Rejoice Nsibande (University of the Witwatersrand)
- A representative from the Department of Higher Education and Training.

Additional information can be found on the TAU page on the Heltasa website (<http://heltasa.org.za/projects/teaching-advancement-university-tau-fellowships-programme/>).

For further information regarding the application process and costs, please consult the Call for Nominations sent to DVCs at all public higher education institutions in May 2017, also

available at <http://heltasa.org.za/projects/teaching-advancement-university-tau-fellowships-programme/>