



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Mamadi Matlhako (Fort Hare)

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ADDITIONAL MEMBERS

Anneke Harms (VUT)

Alison Bucholz (SU)

Corina du Toit (SU)

Elphina Ciske (WSU)

Pia Lamberti (UJ)

EX OFFICIO MEMBER

Henriëtte van den Berg (UFS)

CONTACT DETAILS

Web page:

<http://www.postgrad.co.za/>

Email:

postgraduateforumsa@gmail.com

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NOTIFICATION

New links to useful resources have been added to the PGFSA website under the Resources tab. View them [here](#)

Letter from the outgoing Chairperson

The Postgraduate Forum for Southern Africa was launched in March 2015 at the Postgraduate Supervision Conference hosted by Stellenbosch University at Spier Conference Centre.

Reflecting on the journey of the Forum during the last four years I am grateful to say that the Forum is gaining excellent momentum. When I initiated the Forum in 2015, no one could have prepared me for the valuable lessons learned and the special relationships formed because of this unique experience. The support from the postgraduate management community and from individual academics over the years was heart-warming. I was also supported by an amazing group of colleagues who were part of the steering committee and executive committee members who contributed significantly to the growth of the Forum. I am forever grateful to each of these members.

As I hand over the baton to our incoming chairperson, Dr Mamadi Matlhako, allow me to reflect on the

highlights of the past four years:

- The meeting of colleagues representing graduate support units of 18 South African universities in October 2015 at University of Free State has set a clear pathway for the development of the Forum.
- The approval of the constitution of the Forum in November 2016 at the Heltasa Conference in Cape Town formalised the Forum and served as a springboard to launch the activities of the Forum.
- The Forum hosted Prof Suzanne Ortega, President of the Council of Graduate Schools as keynote speaker at the Postgraduate Supervision Conference 2017. Prof Ortega and Prof Philomina Okeke-Ihejirika (University of Alberta, Canada and member of CODESRIA) also presented a preconference workshop on global trends in graduate support and development. The collaboration between the Forum and the Centre for Higher and Adult Education was continued at the 2019 Postgraduate Supervision Conference with the Forum hosting

Prof Adham Ramadan (Dean of Graduate Studies, American University of Cairo) as keynote speaker. Prof Ramadan also co-facilitated a preconference workshop with Prof Gina Wisker (Brighton University) on the support of international postgraduate students and their supervisors.

- Our membership has grown significantly during the last two years and we are delighted to see increasing interest from more than one unit at some universities.
- During 2018 our website started taking shape and I am confident that it will become a valuable resource for postgraduate students and supervisors.

Serving as chairperson of the Forum was a professionally and personally satisfying experience. I thank the members of the Forum for the opportunity to represent them during the last four years. We have accomplished much, but we have far greater in store for our future.

Warm regards
Henriëtte van den Berg

[Letter from the incoming chairperson](#)

I am pleased and honoured to step into the role of chairperson of the Postgraduate Forum for Southern Africa during a time of particular challenge

and change in postgraduate education. At global level, countries are attempting to prepare for changes to skills required by the new knowledge economy and are anticipating the consequential impact of these expected changes on postgraduate education.

At national level, the South African government is pushing for an increased throughput of PhD students and is providing monetary incentives for every completed Master's and PhD degree. Among the changes is a new proposal by the CHE and NRF to implement a national quality standard for doctoral programmes which meet international quality standards for Doctoral degrees. The Forum is well situated to meet these new challenges, building on the foundation put in place by my predecessor, Dr Henriette van den Berg, and members of the executive committee, Prof Ahmed Wadee, Prof Bloodless Dzwairo, Dr Pia Lamberti and Mrs Alison Bucholz. Our newly elected executive committee members, Prof Elphina Ciske, Dr Anneke Harmse and Ms Corina du Toit, each bring a unique set of skills and experience, which will enhance the Forum's ability to meet the challenges ahead.

I have had the opportunity to be associated with the Forum since its launch in 2015. During the last four years, I have seen the Forum's membership and

activities grow through strategic planning. Some of the Forum's significant accomplishments include benchmarking postgraduate processes and issues, engaging with international bodies that promote postgraduate education, presenting workshops and seminars focusing on challenges and strategic issues relating to enhancing Postgraduate Studies, and establishing our presence on the Internet with a webpage. In reality, much has been done; yet much remains to be done. Dr van den Berg and her team's commitment and Herculean efforts have led to the status of the Forum. I especially wish to thank Dr van den Berg for her leadership as chairperson of the Forum over the past four years and for her many contributions. We expect her to remain very involved with the Forum for many years to come.

I am excited about the opportunity to serve as the chairperson of the Forum, and look forward to working with you.

Warm regards,
Mamadi Matlhako, PhD

[Announcement of the new forum EXCO for the term April 2019 to March 2021](#)

From 1 April 2019, the following members will serve on the EXCO:

Chairperson:
Dr Mamadi Matlhako

Director of Postgraduate Studies
University of Fort Hare

Vice chairperson:

Prof Ahmed Wadee,
Research Professor, Vaal
University of Technology

Additional members:

Prof Bloodless Dzwayiro,
Grants Manager, Durban
University of Technology

Dr Pia Lamberti, Manager
Capacity Development,
Postgraduate School,
University of Johannesburg

Mrs Alison Bucholz, Head
Postgraduate Skills
Development Programme,
Postgraduate Office,
Stellenbosch University

Prof Elphina Cishe, Director
of Research, Walter Sisulu
University

Dr Anneke Harmse, Senior
Lecturer, ICT Department,
Vaal University of
Technology

Ms Corina du Toit,
Programme Manager,
African Doctoral Academy,
Stellenbosch University

**Feedback: Workshop on
“The support and
development of
international students
and their supervisors”**

Facilitators: Prof Gina
Wisker, Dr Gillian Robinson
and Prof Adham Ramadan.

Reports published by the
Council of Graduate Schools
and the European Council of
Graduate Education on the
mental health of
postgraduate students
highlight the personal and
academic challenges

international students
encounter.

Challenges discussed
include a sense of isolation,
culture shock,
communication difficulties,
financial challenges as well
as differences in academic
processes and skills
required to master the
postgraduate research
journey.

The facilitators of the
workshop emphasised the
importance of culturally
inflected research and
supervision practices and
the need for additional
support for supervisors in
preparation of supervising
international students.

Other recommendations
include:

- Appropriate selection of supervisors and examiners
- Creating awareness of issues related to a deferential and dependent inclination in students from different cultural backgrounds.
- Encouraging the construction of literature reviews that include African and other sources of under-represented knowledge.
- Support and training opportunities for international students to assist with the adjustment to culturally diverse environments.
- Increased access to tertiary literacy support and academic writing support.

Upcoming International and National events

QPR2020

Quality in Postgraduate Research (QPR) is the world’s biggest and longest-standing conference on doctoral education. The next **QPR conference will take place from 20-23 APRIL 2020 at the** National Wine Centre, Hackney Road, Adelaide, Australia. The call for abstracts will open shortly. Interested members can contact Lea McBride to join the conference distribution list:
<http://www.qpr.edu.au/contact-qpr>

African Doctoral Academy Winter School, Stellenbosch University, 1 – 12 July 2019

This two-week long Doctoral School offers high impact research design and methodology training, as well as options in academic preparedness and career development. The Schools are open to doctoral candidates (current and prospective), their supervisors and researchers in general.

More information about the programme and how to register can be found [here](#).

