

SAPER briefing note

Bridging the gap: the candidacy phase

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this briefing note is to provide the framework for recommendations pertaining to three focussed interventions to be driven by the South African Council for Planners (SACPLAN) in partnership with the DRDLR, DCOGTA and SALGA to address a gap that had been identified through the South African Planning Education Research project (SAPER) during the phase between Graduation and Registration (the ‘candidacy phase’).

The recommended interventions are:

- To inform current legislation frameworks to address the gap between ‘Graduation and Registration’. The intervention that had been identified is the introduction of a community service year through the Planning Profession Act, 2002 (PPA). Other legislation would be explored to address the implementation and funding of placements (e.g. municipalities, other departments).
- To link unemployed planners through the Community Service year to municipalities with planning capacity challenges to enable to successful implementation of the Spatial Planning and Land Use Management Framework, 2013 (SPLUMA).
- Address the process (and allocation) of funding support through existing programmes (e.g. Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency (MISA)) as well as the format of programmes being offered (e.g. through the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA), and the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA)).

2. Background

The SAPER project is part of an ESRC-NRF Newton collaborative research on Higher Education in South Africa that is, inter alia, exploring the social and economic value of planning education in South Africa, including employability. Included as part the research project were over 90 interviews with practitioners (with a range of experience) within the private public sector, and academic sectors.

These interviews identified an urgent need to improve planning capacity (in terms of the number of planners as well as appropriately qualified planners) in the municipal sphere. Furthermore, a gap was identified that exists between graduation and the graduate (candidate) registering as a technical or professional planner (the candidacy phase). The non-availability of employment and supervision opportunities were identified as challenges experienced by recently graduated planners. These findings are corroborated by comments arising from SACPLAN’s recent series of workshops in all nine provinces.

Along with most professions, graduates are required to complete practical training or in-service training to enable them to attain all the applied skills needed in practice. This training period is known in some professions as ‘articles’ or ‘internship’. In the Planning Profession Act, 2002 (PPA) it is termed practical training.

3. Recommended interventions

To address the issues raised through the SAPER project, the following interventions are proposed.

3.1 *Voluntary Community Service year*

One way of addressing the need for in-service practical training is through a voluntary community service year. The intention is that graduates that have completed their studies on a public bursary be placed into a community service year programme. Municipalities with little or no planning capacity would be able to apply for the placement of candidate planners to expand their capacity, subject to a structured mentoring and supervision

programme. This programme could also be available for graduates to apply for a year of community service to obtain the practical experience they require.

3.2 *Linking unemployed planners through the Community Service year to municipalities with planning capacity challenges.*

The Community Service year could also link unemployed planners to municipalities that lack planners, thus assisting municipalities in building their capacity. This will entail the following:

- Graduates who received public bursaries to be placed at a municipality.
- The placement of an unemployed graduate upon application as part of the Community Service year.
- Legislative amendments of the MISA programme to support the Community Service year as well as creating a structured support programme where candidate planners can receive the supervision and support they require in the absence of registered planners as supervisors.

3.3 *The process and allocation of funding support.*

To deal with the second gap of inadequate supervision and support of candidate planners additional funding support of the Candidacy programme is required. This will entail strengthening the existing MISA, LGSETA and CETA mentoring programmes.

Financial support will be required for the following

- To assist employers to pay stipends (salaries) to candidates (qualified planners)
- To fund the public bursaries
- To support and extend the current mentoring and supervision programmes.

Bursary funding would be the responsibility of the relevant national departments (DCOGTA, DRDLR and/or DPME) and the Department of Higher Education in respect of National Student Academic Financial Aid Scheme (NASFAS) bursaries.

4. Implementing the interventions

Several actions will have to be taken to implement the interventions as elucidated below.



4.1 *Defining the programmes*

In conjunction with the relevant national government departments, SACPLAN should prepare a more detailed document expounding on the functioning of the service year and candidacy programmes and their legislative and financial implications. Furthermore, the specific skill-sets and suggested time required to acquire these by candidate planners should be set out in guidelines for the supervision of candidate planners for municipalities and other employers. Such guidelines should then be part of the MISA and LGSETA/CETA mentoring guidelines.

4.2 *Legislative interventions*

The PPA should be amended to include the voluntary Community Service year and require appropriate funding for a candidacy programme. Preparing these amendments will be the responsibility of SACPLAN and the DRDLR/DPME, working in conjunction with DCOGTA.

The legislation pertaining to MISA may have to be reviewed by DCOGTA.

4.3 *Funding and budget implications*

It is envisaged that the Community Service year programme will be introduced first as a pilot programme to determine its efficacy and cost-effectiveness. Once reviewed, appropriate amendments can be made, and the programme introduced incrementally. The direct costs of the Community Service programme will be the stipends paid to graduates placed in municipalities as well as the costs of placing them and monitoring their progress.

The direct costs of extending the support and supervision programmes will be those linked to the supervisors and well as administrative costs.

5. Projected outcomes

The spatial fragmentation of South Africa's social and economic environment exacts a vast toll daily on workers, residents and commuters, with the poor bearing the brunt of the burden. The National Development Plan noted the importance of urban and regional planning in





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transforming the spatial landscape to one that is more just and sustainable. The ability of the planning profession to lead such change is dependent on the skills of planners, especially at local municipality level which is responsible for the management of spatial development. Consequently, capacitating local government and empowering young planners through the candidacy programmes suggested in this briefing note will contribute to the goals of spatial, social and economic transformation.

For more information

More information on the SAPER project can also be obtained from <http://saperproject.weebly.com>

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List of abbreviations

DCOGTA	Department of Co-Operative Governance and Traditional Affairs
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
MISA	Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency
NSAFAS	National Student Academic Financial Aid Scheme
SACPLAN	South African Council for Planners
SALGA	South African Local Government Association

