

# Nelson Mandela University officially opens its medical school

The Nelson Mandela University (NMU) has officially launched its medical school, a move the Department of Higher Education, Science and Innovation has described as the realisation of a long-held dream.



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To mark the occasion on Tuesday, Higher Education, Science and Innovation Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, extended his congratulations to the university for this landmark achievement of becoming the tenth medical school in the country.

“I would like to commend the university for the continued role that it plays in this region, through its excellent teaching and learning, research and community engagement programmes.”

According to the Minister, the establishment will promote local economic development within the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, South Africa's fifth-largest municipality.

He told the delegates that the country should be proud of the excellent teaching and learning facility dedicated to the

training of future health professionals.

Nzimande also took the time to pay tribute to the late Professor Lungile Pepeta who died of Covid-19 last year for his enormous contribution in laying a strong foundation for this medical school. “I hear you may name this after Prof Pepeta. I certainly think it would be highly appreciated.”

Although the school was launched today, Nzimande said the first cohort of students is nearing the end of their first year of study.

According to the Minister, the NMU Medical School, located at the Missionvale campus, aims to position health education to be more responsive to South Africa’s health needs by widening access to healthcare programmes.

“The school will generally add to the much-needed health professionals that our country so needs to improve our health system as a country.”

He said the establishment of the school has been long coming, dating back to 2013 when a business plan was first developed. The National Skills Fund subsequently pumped R73 million into it with the backing from the department.

“I am pleased that this new medical degree focuses on comprehensive primary health care from the first year of study.”

Nzimande said he was pleased that the school is planning to use global technological innovations to support interactive education.

“I also fully subscribe to the ethos of this medical school, which are firmly based on community and primary health care provision by developing health care professionals who are committed to providing accessible and affordable healthcare services.”

In addition, he announced that in the current financial year, the department has allocated R644.7 million for the clinical training of health professionals in the sector, of which R19 million will go to NMU.

“As you are aware, the country’s public hospitals are overstretched due to the scarcity of health professionals.”

In addressing these shortages, the department has been working closely with the Department of Health to equip the universities and clinical training platforms. “We are committed to continuing with this important work to strengthen our health training and education in South Africa.”

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