

Academic Staff Development through the Graduate Teaching Assistantship Programme

An Implementation Update: 2015-2020

Preamble:

One of the three of RUFORUM's strategic goals is to *“build synergy from networks of specialisation to develop quality human resources and capacity required to intensify and increase Africa's agricultural productivity and competitiveness”*. This strategic goal addresses a need to fill a persistent human resource and capacity gap in agriculture while taking advantage of the strengths of the Network. Over the years, nations, and indeed, universities have realised that having this capacity built for them abroad comes at a great cost, notwithstanding the contribution to building Africa's human capacity, albeit at a slow rate. High training expenses, absence from office for at least three years resulting in further shortage of staff, and the risk of brain drain are all factors that have made overseas training for Africa costly in both the short- and long-term. Because of all these challenges, RUFORUM recognized the urgent need for alternative means of training staff and building teaching and research capacity in universities. In 2008, several regional programmes were developed across selected member universities, and then later in 2014, the Graduate Teaching Assistantship programme was introduced.

The **Graduate Teaching Assistantship** (GTA) programme was introduced in 2014 and has been under implementation since 2015 in order to: (i) improve the quality of higher education and increase the pool of PhD-level trained academic staff in African universities; (ii) provide opportunities for the doctoral research to contribute more directly to African development; (iii) strengthen inter- university collaboration in the field of higher education in Africa; and (iv) promote staff mobility among RUFORUM member universities, and across Africa.

Key Features & Highlights of GTA Implementation, 2015-2020:

1. ***It is synergistic:*** The implementation of the GTA programme recognizes and therefore, takes advantage of the comparative advantages, specializations and training niches of the RUFORUM Network. In other words, it operates on the principal of sharing: giving & taking, making the Network truly “***Stronger Together***”. It has given opportunities to universities to have human resource capacity built in agricultural and non-agricultural fields.
2. ***It is truly a regional initiative:*** The GTA programme has been implemented in a total of 22 of the 38 RUFORUM member countries among a total of 37 sending and 25 hosting universities (**Tables 1 &2**). The current coverage spans Central, Southern, Eastern and Western regions of the African continent, thus ***promoting a true mobility among member universities and across Africa***. With 82 Vice-Chancellors endorsing the GTA MoU, it is envisaged that contribution to the programme will increase bringing forth more opportunities for training university staff at the doctoral level.
3. ***It is inclusive:*** In an attempt to keeping with RUFORUM’s value of promoting a balance in the gender of researchers, faculty and students and increasing the pool of women scientists, the implementation of the GTA programme has been alive to the deliberate inclusion of especially female academic members of staff. Currently, **30** and **25%** of university staff under training and awaiting placement, respectively, are female (**Tables 1 &2**). These low percentages suggest the need for stronger affirmative action and more effective equity measures.

It is progressing towards the set target: Since 2015, a total of 454 university staff across the Network have been nominated for training in different fields. Of these, 133 have been successfully placed, while 289 are awaiting placement in different doctoral programmes (**Tables 1 &2**). For the period 2015-2022, the training target was set at 325, meaning that if all the nominated staff were to be placed and trained, the programme would have met and exceeded the set target for the period. The high nomination numbers suggest a potential of the GTA programme to contribute effectively to the development of human resources for the Network universities.

Table 1: Summary of current GTAs under training across RUFORUM Network Universities: 2015-2020

Country	Sending		Gender		Hosting		Gender	
	<i>Number of Universities Sending</i>	<i>Total Number of Staff Sent</i>	<i>Number of Male Staff Sent</i>	<i>Number of Female Staff</i>	<i>Number of Host Universities</i>	<i>Total Number of Staff Hosted</i>	<i>Number of Male Staff Hosted</i>	<i>Number of Female Staff Hosted</i>
DRC	2	16	13	3	0	0	0	0
Ethiopia	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Ghana	1	4	4	0	1	4	1	3
Kenya	5	11	10	1	7	49	32	17
Liberia	1	7	3	4	0	0	0	0
Malawi	4	19	14	5	1	13	11	2
Namibia	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Nigeria	3	8	5	3	1	7	6	1

Rwanda	1	7	7	0	1	2	2	0
Lesotho	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
South Sudan	1	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
Sudan	2	7	5	2	0	0	0	0
Uganda	8	35	21	14	7	38	25	13
Zimbabwe	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Botswana	1	3	0	3	0	0	0	0
Sierra Leone	1	4	3	1	0	0	0	0
Swaziland	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Benin	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	0
Mozambique	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	0
Tanzania	0	0	0	0	1	3	3	0
South Africa	0	0	0	0	3	9	6	3

Zambia	1	1	0	1	1	2	1	1
Total	37	133	93	40	25	133	93	40

Table 2: Summary of GTA nominees awaiting placement across RUFORUM Network Universities: 2015-2020

Country	Sending		Gender	
	<i>Number of Universities Sending</i>	<i>Total Number of Staff to be Sent</i>	<i>Number of Male Staff</i>	<i>Number of Female Staff</i>
DRC	2	26	22	4
Ethiopia	0	0	0	0
Ghana	1	6	5	1
Kenya	3	32	25	7
Liberia	1	21	18	3
Malawi	4	25	19	6
Namibia	1	11	9	2
Nigeria	3	17	11	6
Rwanda	1	2	1	1

Lesotho	0	0	0	0
Sudan	3	9	8	1
Uganda	8	81	51	30
Zimbabwe	1	6	4	2
Benin	1	1	0	1
Mozambique	3	28	24	4
Tanzania	1	4	3	1
South Africa	0	0	0	0
Botswana	1	4	3	1
Sierra Leone	1	16	14	2
Zambia	0	0	0	0
Total	35	289	217	72

Looking Ahead:

- GTA programme will remain flexible and responsive to Network-wide needs necessitating changes in its implementation
- The GTA programme has a lot of potential as a cheaper, Network-wide and Africa-owned instrument of building human resources and university training and research capacities for impact, relevance and to the attainment of national, regional, continental and global aspirations