

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**UKZN DISTINGUISHED STUDENTS' AWARD (DSA)  
POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

Custodian:	University Teaching & Learning Office		
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## **A: POLICY STATEMENT**

### **1. PURPOSE STATEMENT**

This document sets out University policy and procedures for recognising and rewarding both outstanding student academic achievement and excellence in community engagement or University service as reflected in the vision, mission and goals of the university. This award provides a means to give concrete expression to the values implicit in African Scholarship that underpin our University. It does so by creating a special cadre of its most talented, caring and exceptional graduates and young leaders who are specifically selected as exemplary in embodying the ideals and attributes that the University seeks to create in every graduate.

### **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The provision of appropriate incentives and rewards for student success is an important function of the teaching and learning structures of the University. It signals what is valued and cherished by the University community as student learning outcomes. One mechanism through which exceptional success on the part of students can be acclaimed and celebrated is through the introduction of a special award, named the UKZN Distinguished Students' Award (DSA). The DSA encourages students to work toward developing holistic attributes that reflect the UKZN mission of academic excellence and critical engagement with society.

The recent introduction and availability of student co-curricular records which document student contributions and achievements other than academic, together with candidates' academic records, supports the need to introduce a reward that provides incentives for students to excel both academically and in terms of contribution to community or university initiatives in the course of their university studies. By rewarding outstanding under-graduate and honours students, the award also encourages them to further their studies with UKZN and continue in building their exceptional educational track record.

This award is intended to complement the many other University, College and School awards by recognising from among all graduates across the university, those demonstrating attainment of both outstanding performance and excellence in community engagement or university service.

### **3. DEFINITION OF TERMS**

#### **3.1 Distinguished student**

A distinguished student is one who will have achieved excellent academic performance, being at the very least in the top 15% of students. In addition, the awardees will have demonstrated an outstanding co-curricula record of community engagement or university service, including leadership qualities. The quality and extent of excellence in all categories will be evaluated on the basis of a portfolio of evidence and information and an interview.

#### **3.2 Community Engagement**

A distinguished student will have demonstrated a record of sustained highly recognised involvement in community initiatives, typically having taken a leadership role within a community-based organisation or created a successful innovation or intervention that adds value to the community. For the purposes of this award, activities under this heading relate to the upliftment and development of communities outside the University, primarily through the application and use of the student's broad areas of study, but which are not necessarily part of their formal programmes (e.g. credit bearing internship). Community engagement adds value, is significant and relevant to the interest and wellbeing of a community within the framework of the university vision and mission and includes participation in initiatives that meet local or national development imperatives. It does not normally include remunerative work, individual outreach in support of personal interest or ideology, and activities in organizations to which individuals belong in their private capacity (e.g. political or religious).

#### **3.3 University Service**

Distinguished University service refers to a sustained level of recognized achievement by a student with respect to activities within the University, which could take the form of representative responsibilities in,

or on behalf of the University that bring prestige and honour to the University; or refer to contributions to the development and upliftment of members or groups within the University community, especially in relation to the student's area of study. Evidence of achievement in University service could include: leadership in sporting, cultural, educational, student governance and similar activities in which the student has made a mark and that have enhanced the image and reputation of the University; or refer to highly recognised service and engagement in a relevant college, school or unit particularly those that promote participation in their discipline or profession; or take account of significant and creative contribution to capacity building, peer mentoring and support activities in the University; as well as early leadership or participation in academic or professional organisations; or highly regarded public representations on behalf of the University. These are typically activities or work for which the student has not been remunerated or in which the student exceeds participation and outputs well beyond the requirements for which they are given remuneration.

#### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY**

The objectives of this policy are to encourage students from their early years as undergraduates to

- strive for a well-rounded University education;
- combine the drive for their personal growth and academic ambitions with a concern for the welfare, success and well being of others;
- take leadership and show initiative in the different spheres of their own and University life;
- become socially-responsive by developing a sense of service and caring toward others less fortunate than themselves;
- be creative and innovative in whatever they do and learn, both in their studies as well as in community engagement or University service;
- connect and apply what they are learning in their studies for the betterment of communities whether inside or outside the University;
- continue into postgraduate studies and research in the University; and
- feel proud of the university and contribute to activities that enhance its image and reputation

The university has pledged to “embrace our responsibility as a public institution to support and contribute to national and regional development, and the welfare and upliftment of the wider community, through the generation and dissemination of knowledge and the production of socially-responsible graduates”<sup>1</sup>. This policy and procedures gives practical meaning to the declared values of the university by identifying and honouring students who demonstrate holistic intellectual achievement with exceptional contribution and commitment to social or educational community engagement and service.

It enables the University to realise its goal of being an institution of choice for students by producing “well educated, competent and sought after graduates” (Goal 5, p 12) while at the same time, promoting another goal of responsible community engagement “by connecting with and committing ourselves to the communities we serve in a manner that adds value and earns their respect, admiration and trust” (Goal 2, p 8).

The objective of this policy is also to promote and retain such exceptional and remarkable students to continue their postgraduate studies at the University and undertake research and thereby continue to enhance the image of the University as a top research institution of choice.

#### **5. SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

The policy and procedures apply only to registered students and staff employed in the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

A recipient of a UKZN DSA is not eligible for a further DSA.

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<sup>1</sup> University of KwaZulu-Natal Strategic Plan (2007-2016), page 6

## 6. THE POLICY

The Distinguished Students' Award requires candidates to be excellent academically by having demonstrated successful and effective learning outcomes and to have outstanding sustained contribution to community or University initiatives showing leadership with positive impact and change.

Students registered at the University in their final year of study in an Undergraduate Bachelors degree or in an Honours degree are eligible to be nominated provided they have been registered for at least two consecutive years in the University.

The following will be considered in support of a nomination for the Award:

- 6.1 Demonstrated remarkable leadership, representation and participation in university service, with respect to the advancement of members or groups within the University community on a sustained basis for a period of at least two years. This may include evidence of collaborative, creative educational engagement, research, and outstanding contribution to a discipline, school or college in the pursuit of common University goals.
- 6.2 Demonstrated exceptional and consistent contribution to community engagement (for a period of at least two years) in projects or initiatives aimed at the development and upliftment of those members, showing innovation, leadership and evidence of research or impact;  
OR
- 6.3 Demonstrated remarkable leadership, representation and participation in university service, with respect to the advancement of members or groups within the University community on a sustained basis for a period of at least two years. This may include evidence of collaborative, creative educational engagement, research, and outstanding contribution to a discipline, school or college in the pursuit of common University goals.
- 6.4 Evidence that the nominee's achievements and actions advanced the University's strategic goals and enhanced the reputation of the university locally, nationally and/or internationally
- 6.5 Evidence of insightful reflection and learning from the students' own broad university education and experience, self authored publications, conference presentations or other similar written output.

The successful candidates must meet criteria 6.1, 6.4 and 6.5; and at least one of 6.2 or 6.3 from those listed above.

The DSA Selection Committee will shortlist candidates on the basis of a portfolio of evidence and information including their academic and co-curricular records, testimonials, referee reports, narratives and descriptions of projects and activities, and may call for additional information if necessary. Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed to make a final selection.

A maximum of two University-wide awards will be made to Undergraduate (Bachelor's degree) and/or Honours students graduating from the University. One or no awards will be made if suitable candidates who meet the criteria for the award are not found.

Each award carries:

- fee remission for Postgraduate study at UKZN to encourage candidates to continue to study at UKZN,
- a certificate, and
- funding, which may be utilised toward further Postgraduate study (to encourage and support research); and for their community engagement or University service being recognised (to encourage and support the candidate to continue with their project, initiative or activity).

[Note: The allocation and utilisation of the funding award will be evaluated and approved by the DSA Selection Committee on the basis of evidence and information established through the portfolio and interview processes].

## **B. PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

### **1. ADMINISTRATION OF THE AWARD**

The award will be administered by the University Teaching and Learning Office. The DVC: Teaching and Learning will call for nominations and convene and chair the DSA Selection Committee.

The University Teaching and Learning Office will advertise the existence of the award to the University community. A call for nomination will be made annually via the UKZN LAN Notice System. Closing dates will be posted on the University Teaching and Learning Office website. Nomination forms for the **Award** can be downloaded from the University Teaching and Learning Office Website.

### **2. ELIGIBILITY TO NOMINATE**

Members of staff and registered students of the University of KwaZulu-Natal will be eligible to nominate and to second candidates for the award. In addition, School or College Boards may nominate candidates for the award.

### **3. NOMINATION**

Candidates are nominated for the award. Each such nomination must be seconded by three members of the University staff or registered students. Nominations should be submitted, on the official nomination form (Annexure 1), to the DVC: Teaching & Learning, by the closing date.

Nominees are required to submit a Portfolio of Evidence and Information (Annexure 2 and 3) by the date specified for submission, which will generally be one to two months after nomination. Any other information regarding the candidate's achievements in respect of his/her academic or community engagement may be supplied or solicited by the DSA selection committee.

Nomination forms must be submitted by the due date; and the Portfolio of Evidence and Information from the nominee must be lodged with the DVC: Teaching & Learning, by the due date.

### **4. THE SUBMISSION**

The educational achievements and contributions of nominees will be evaluated on the basis of the Portfolio submitted by the nominee. This portfolio should be confined to a maximum of one file, with the evidence for respective criteria as specified in the policy (see Section 6) clearly indexed.

The nominee's achievement of the requisite criteria must be documented in support of the nomination. Supporting documentation by the candidate her/himself, the relevant academic, student support services staff, peer, and/or community organizations must be attached to provide evidence, information and motivations:

- 4.1 Details of the nominee's major academic accomplishments including his/her academic record and referee reports providing an assessment of achievement and performance
- 4.2 Narrative(s) from the relevant community site of the candidate's contribution attesting to the quality of work and involvement of the candidate; description of project or activities including outputs, referee reports, co-curricula record and any independent evaluation or verification of participation

OR

- 4.3 Description and evidence of University engagement or service with the candidate's co-curricula records, including reports from student support services, referee reports and any independent evaluation or verification of participation
- 4.4 Candidate's statement on reflection of broad University experience and motivation for the award including how their community engagement or University service has advanced the vision, mission, values, goals or image and reputation of the University and how they would utilise the funding from the award (max 1000 words)
- 4.5 Candidate's CV

## **5. THE SELECTION PROCEDURE**

### **5.1. The selection committee**

The DSA selection committee will have the following membership:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning (Chair)
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- One Dean, who may be a College Dean or Dean & Head of School, from each of the four Colleges nominated by the DVC & Head of College
- Executive Dean of Students (or nominee)
- One representative from the Central SRC

### **5.2. Selection of Candidates**

The Selection Committee will meet to give preliminary consideration to the submitted portfolios. At this meeting the committee will identify and solicit any additional information on the candidates deemed necessary to evaluate the submission and make an initial shortlist if necessary and possible.

Where it is deemed necessary, the Selection Committee may request an appropriate Dean, Deputy Dean or Head of School to evaluate the submitted portfolio to assist the committee in its assessment of the achievement of the candidate and/or request a further motivation.

The Selection Committee may also give consideration to the desirability of additional assessments or verification from the members of the community (or university) project or initiative and request a report from the site/s where the nominee is performing community work (or service) attesting to the quality and impact of the work for validation and verification.

Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed by the Selection Committee to make the final selection.

In the absence of nominations of adequate quality the Committee may solicit additional nominations and extend the deadline for nominations. The selection committee may limit the number of awards in any one year or not make awards if there are insufficient applications of suitable distinction.

### **5.3 Outcomes**

The DVC: Teaching and Learning will inform all nominees of the outcome of their nomination.

The UKZN Distinguished Students' Awards will be formally announced by the DVC: Teaching & Learning

## 6. TIMEFRAMES

Call for nominations	Beginning August
Closing date for submission of nominations	Mid September
Closing date for submission of portfolios	Mid October
1 <sup>st</sup> meeting of selection committee	November
2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting of selection committee (if required)	December
Interviews of shortlisted candidates	December/January
Recipients notified	End January

**UKZN DISTINGUISHED STUDENTS' AWARD**  
**NOMINATION FORM**

**NOMINEE**

**NAME OF NOMINEE** (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Student number: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

College : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Nominee : \_\_\_\_\_

**NOMINATORS**

**1. NAME OF NOMINATOR** (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Staff / Student number: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

College : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Nominator: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. NAME OF NOMINATOR** (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Staff / Student number: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

College : \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. NAME OF NOMINATOR** (Please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Staff / Student number: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

College: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**NB**

**Please Attach:**

- 1. The student academic record of nominee; and**
- 2. A brief narrative of no more than 500 words signed by one of the nominators motivating why the nominee should be considered for this award.**

## UKZN Distinguished Student Award Portfolio Guidelines

**A.** The following details, among any other, should be included in the **candidate's CV**

### **1. Personal details**

- 1.1 Name and Surname
- 1.2 Name known by
- 1.3 Date of birth (yy/mm/dd)
- 1.4 Country, province and place of birth (e.g. village/city)
- 1.5 Gender
- 1.6 Race
- 1.7 Language/s
- 1.8 Citizenship/Nationality
- 1.9 ID/Passport No
- 1.10 Father's occupation
- 1.11 Mother's occupation
- 1.12 Current employment and name of employer (if applicable)

### **2. Contact details**

- 2.1 Telephone Term time (e.g. University Res)
- 2.2 Telephone Home
- 2.3 Cell
- 2.4 Fax
- 2.5 E-mail address/es
- 2.6 Physical address
  - Permanent (parents' /next of kin or non-term time address)
  - Term time address
- 2.7 Postal address
  - Permanent (parents' /next of kin or non-term time address)
  - Term time address

### **3. Academic details**

- 3.1 Current degree of study
- 3.2 Major courses / Preferred academic discipline
- 3.3 High schooling (name, urban/rural/farm)
- 3.4 Matric Results
- 3.5 Any other qualifications
- 3.6 Proposed further study
- 3.7 Proposed university for further study
- 3.8 Reasons for this if not UKZN

### **4. Referees –**

The name and contact details of no fewer than 3 and not more than 5 referees should be listed; at least 3 of these must be persons who have taught the candidate in his/her undergraduate or Honours degree.

Attach all **referees reports** to your CV. For each referee indicate their

- name
- address
- telephone/cell
- e-mail.

## **B. Guidelines for the Community Engagement /University Service Portfolio**

For a project or initiative for which the candidate is being recognised as community engagement or university service, provide, among other information, the following:

1. Project Title
2. Person(s) in leadership of the project (name and contact details)
3. Project Address/Location
4. Description of the project: aims and goals, activities or work undertaken; nature of participants; outcomes, products and outputs, funding and resources used and generated
5. Documentation on the project
6. Narrative on the nature of the candidate's participation and contribution; including testimonials from those who have been direct recipients or beneficiaries; and the link between the project and the candidate's studies or school
7. Any report or evaluation of the project, particularly with respect to the candidates' involvement
8. Any self-authored publication or presentation by the candidate related to the project

### **Referees**

The name and contact details of not fewer than 3 and not more than 5 referees should be listed; at least 3 of these must be persons who have participated in the project, initiative or activity with you in some form.

Attach all **referees reports** to your CV. For each referee indicate their

- name
- address
- telephone/cell
- e-mail

## **C. Candidate's Statement**

The candidate's statement is a short creative reflection of no more than 1000 words or 2-3 pages on their university experience which should also serve to provide a motivation for why s/he should be the recipient of the award. It can refer to both academic and non-academic activities and achievements that make for a holistic university education.

The candidate is expected to comment on their educational, community engagement or university service experience with respect to the vision, mission, values and goals of the university, particularly as a premier University of African Scholarship. The statement should address the ways in which the candidate's contribution has enhanced the image and reputation of the School, College or University.

The statement should also give an indication of how the candidate expects to utilise the award should s/he be the successful candidate both in respect of furthering their studies, undertaking any research and advancing the community engagement or university service for which they would be receiving recognition.

### Terms and Conditions of the UKZN DSA

The portfolio must include this page with the terms and conditions and the consent and declaration

1. A UKZN Distinguished Students' Awardee is encouraged to continue further postgraduate studies at UKZN in which case the Awardee will receive fee remission. The funding is awarded for one or a maximum of two years from the year in which the award is made.
2. The award may be utilised for postgraduate studies elsewhere including for study abroad. The award includes contribution to the costs of: registration and tuition; study materials; economy class travel at the beginning and end of an academic year; accommodation and meals equivalent to university residence; or for conducting research.
3. A UKZN Distinguished Students' Awardee may elect to use the award, or part thereof, to continue funding the community engagement or university service project, initiative or activity for which they have received recognition. In this case the Awardee will provide a budget for approval. The award may be used for travel, materials, subsistence for the awardee or participants and any other costs deemed appropriate related to the project or initiative and approved by the DSA Selection Committee.
4. A UKZN Distinguished Students' Awardee may hold other scholarships or bursaries but must declare these before or when the award is made and note that the maximum two year period will still apply.
5. Normally payments will not be directly made to students but to the institution or organisation concerned.
6. All UKZN Distinguished Students' Awardees undertake to provide a summary report within two years of having received the award.
7. All UKZN Distinguished Students' Awardees agree to participate in marketing activities, workshops and talks to encourage other students to strive toward the objectives of this award and nominate potential candidates.
8. A UKZN Distinguished Student Awardee will strive to continue to maintain the high standard of performance, moral and ethical conduct that justified the award.

### Consent and Declaration

1. I do hereby give my unqualified consent to the UKZN Distinguished Students' Award Selection Committee to make whatsoever enquiries and solicit information it deems fit about me in connection with my suitability to be awarded a UKZN DSA for which I have been nominated.
2. In addition, I indemnify and hold harmless the University of KwaZulu-Natal, its employees, and its representatives against any claims, cost and expenses of whatever nature as a result of or leading from the enquiry referred to above.
3. I have read and am familiar with eligibility requirements, policy and procedures of the UKZN DSA.
4. I accept the terms and condition of the UKZN DSA and accept that the decision of the UKZN Distinguished Students' Award Selection Committee will be final.
5. I further declare that any misrepresentation of the facts in this application by false declaration, omission of information or both, will entitle the University of KwaZulu-Natal to summarily withdraw the award and associated funding.

Signed on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2010

at \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's signature \_\_\_\_\_