

Call for Research Chair

Coupled Human-Natural Systems (CHANS) in Montane Environments as Social-ecological Systems (SES)

South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) & the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU)

As mountain environments comprise social-ecological entities with specific characteristics, opportunities and challenges, understanding Coupled Human-Natural Systems (CHANS) is an essential component of mountain research globally. Because mountains – as providers of key ecosystem goods and services – are under human pressure, the production of in-depth knowledge of human-ecological interactions in a montane context is essential to inform policies and practices for the sustainable socio-economic development of communities living in mountain ecosystems.

The South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) and the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU; based on the Qwaqwa Campus of the University of the Free State) are calling for comprehensive expressions of interest from suitable candidates for a National Research Foundation (NRF) Research Chair in **Coupled Human-Natural Systems in Montane Environments**.

The focus of the Chair will be to expand/refine the existing observatory protocol and research activities to develop a pragmatic, theoretical, and operational social-ecological framework that integrates multi-scale ecological, social observations and other sources of knowledge, and engages partners in a multi-stakeholder and mutual learning platform to address complex large-scale environmental issues (i.e. ‘wicked problems’). The immediate focus will be the Maloti-Drakensberg, with a view to pioneering the concept of mountains as social-ecological systems in southern Africa as a virtually unexplored topic in this region.

Research Chair Information

- The Chair is shared by SAEON and the ARU and will be based on the Qwaqwa Campus of the University of the Free State.
- The relationship of the Chair to both SAEON and the ARU/UFS will be defined in a Memorandum of Agreement between SAEON and the ARU.
- The Chair will have the same conditions as the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI).
- The Chair is a five year term renewable for a further two terms based on evaluation against a performance agreement.
- The Candidate will preferably reside in South Africa for the duration of the Chair award.
- Following this Call, up to three Candidates will be invited to compile full proposals for consideration.

Responsibilities

- Contribute to the development of a mountain-focused long-term social-ecological research (LTSER) observatory as part of existing SAEON and ARU activities.
- Foster and drive trans-disciplinary research around ‘wicked problems’ in the Maloti-Drakensberg.
- Enhance research on southern African mountains as social-ecological systems and contribute to the Expanded Freshwater and Terrestrial Environmental Observation Network (EFTEON)
- Facilitate research scenarios in which local stakeholders help to identify the research questions and modelling frameworks.
- Contribute to the development of Sustainability Science as a research theme in the ARU.
- Explore the potential contribution of local SAEON/ARU activities into a global context as part of a wider ‘community of mountain observatories’ and of the Global Environmental Research Infrastructure initiative.

- Develop relationships across Africa and with the Global South, and represent the Global South on international platforms, including the International Long-Term Ecological Research (ILTER) network.
- Promote 'science to knowledge to action' through interactions with stakeholders at relevant scales.
- Conduct research and supervise post-graduates (a minimum of 80% of time, and an average of 10 Masters and Doctoral students per annum); the remainder of the time may be dedicated to administration and/or undergraduate teaching at Qwaqwa.
- Mentor Post-doctoral Research Fellows and early career researchers who form part of the Chair.
- Contribute to the life and vision of the ARU in its journey to becoming a continental leader in African mountain research.
- Attract and secure additional funding, particularly international funding.
- Strengthen the existing good relationship between SAEON and the ARU.

Candidate Criteria

- Recognised internationally as an undisputed leader in the field of Coupled Human-Natural Systems/social-ecological systems.
- A superior record in attracting and supervising post-graduate students and Post-doctoral Research Fellows.
- Have, or be willing to develop, a specific focus on mountains.
- Proven trans-disciplinary research abilities.
- Appointable at the level of a full Professor (benchmarked nationally in South Africa).
- If South African, should be an A- or B-rated researcher (as per NRF standards), or equivalent.
- Comfortable with rural contexts.
- Excellent people skills.
- Comfortable working in a multi-cultural environment.
- Proficient mentoring skills.

Application Requirements:

- Comprehensive Curriculum Vitae.
- Letter of Motivation.

Submissions should to be addressed as below and submitted via email to ClarkVR@ufs.ac.za and vincentralph.clark@gmail.com.

The Director
 Afromontane Research Unit
 University of the Free State: Qwaqwa Campus
 Private Bag X13
 Phuthaditjhaba 9866
 Free State Province, South Africa
 Attention: Dr Ralph Clark

Closing Date:

30th September 2018

Prospective candidates may contact Dr Clark (Office Tel: +27 (0)58 718 5407; Cell: +27 (0)72 439 8981) for further information and for a copy of the *Framework & Funding Guide for SARChI Chair for the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON)*.

