

## SU faculties join forces for new MSc programme focused on food security

Stellenbosch University's (SU) two-year MSc programme in Food and Nutrition Security will begin 2017 and will help policy makers and people in non-government organisations make educated decisions on questions about food provision and security. The course takes aspects such as good health and the role of adequate nutrition therein, into consideration.



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This is the first postgraduate course at Stellenbosch University to be presented by the joint effort of two faculties. It will be housed in the Faculty of AgriSciences' Department of Food Science and the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences' Department of Interdisciplinary Health Sciences (Human Nutrition Division).

"Nutrition and food security is not only about making sure that no one goes hungry, but also about ensuring that the right kinds of food are produced and that all citizens of the country have access to healthy options to eat," says Prof Gunnar Sigge of Stellenbosch University's Department of Food Science. "This is easier said than done because poverty and unemployment play their part in how affordable and easy it is for people to eat so-called 'healthy foods'."

Students following the two-year course shall be required to attend certain block courses at Stellenbosch. They will be able to complete further study from their home bases thanks to telematic broadcasts and video streaming. This will enable them to study in tandem with their given career choices.

The postgraduate course is aimed especially at people who work for the government or for non-government organisations or in large corporations with a food and nutrition security focus, and who have to make decisions concerning food and nutrition security. Included in the course will be an overview of the socio-economic conditions, the various needs of rural communities versus city dwellers, and cultural differences where food preference is concerned. In terms of the health component of the course, students will learn more about the importance of certain foodstuffs in a healthy diet and the role of epidemics, as well as about functional and genetically modified foods.

Prof Sigge of the SU Department of Food Science answered the following questions about the new programme:

### **What qualifications do you require to take this course?**

A relevant BSc degree in the Science (three years) and an Honours degree, or a BSc Agriculture degree or a four year degree in Health Sciences with a minimum pass mark of 60%, or a Bachelors or Honours degree that has been approved by the Senate on level 8 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), with the same pass mark as mentioned above.

### **Do students need to be selected for this course?**

Yes, only a specified number of students are chosen for this course per annum.

### **What is the timeframe involved?**

The programme stretches over a minimum of two years, but it is not necessary for students to be on campus full-time.

### **What is the format of the course?**

It is a structured programme which is presented mainly by means of technologically assisted instruction, in combination with courses on the Stellenbosch campus of Stellenbosch University. The programme comprises twelve theoretic modules and a research project.

Students are expected to complete a series of compulsory modules in the first year. Under consideration will be the conceptualisation of food systems, perils and risks in connection with food safety, and the role of the agricultural sector in ensuring food security.

In the field of health, students will learn more about epidemics, the role of different foodstuffs and their importance for good health, functional and genetically modified kinds of foods, and the food chain. In their second year, students will find out more about how to assess aspects of food security and how to formulate policies in this regard.

### **Where can prospective students find out more about what it entails?**

For inquiries about the programme content, please contact Prof Gunnar Sigge, chairman of the SU Department of Food Science at [gos@sun.ac.za](mailto:gos@sun.ac.za), or Prof Xikombiso Mbhenyane at [xgm@sun.ac.za](mailto:xgm@sun.ac.za). For general inquiries, contact Ghafsa Gamiet ([ghgamiet@sun.ac.za](mailto:ghgamiet@sun.ac.za)) or Cheryl Nieuwoudt ([cn2@sun.ac.za](mailto:cn2@sun.ac.za)).