



NIHSS QUARTERLY REPORT TO DHET

1 OCTOBER – 31 DECEMBER 2020

(QUARTER 3 of 2020/21)

A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences concluded the second quarter of the 2020/21 financial year on 31 December 2020, having achieved the following:

The Institute delivered phenomenally on three strategic flagship initiatives; the 6th Annual National Doctoral Conference (ANDC) from 3-5 November 2020, the Inaugural HSS Alumni Conference on 4-5 November 2020, as well as six Encounters' Sessions that were presented throughout the duration of the two conferences. Not only were we able to present two fully-fledged virtual conferences running concurrently for our doctoral fellows and alumni, the Encounters' Sessions opened to the general public, equally brought our important mandate to life as the featured authors and artist spoke to topical current issues of the day, while showcasing the contributions of the Humanities and Social Sciences to society. Delivered on a hybrid model of live streaming and pre-recorded interviews, with the NIHSS project team, some of our conveners and mentors and the technical teams based on site, at the Birchwood OR Tambo Conference Centre, we were the epitome of excellence in action, proving indeed that no task is too daunting for Team NIHSS!

In addition to the logistical challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, the current financial year has had the added uncertainty arising from the lack of funds from the National Skills Fund. This has had a detrimental effect on certain Key Performance Indicators on the Annual Performance Plan that could not be implemented and achieved or were revised downwards in terms of financial resource allocation.

As stated in the Annual Performance Plan, the number of *doctoral theses to be converted into publications, contributing further to the HSS*, and would have resulted in 15 doctoral dissertations being converted into publications (books, monographs). However, this was not implemented, given the considerable resources it would have required. This is a loss for the HSS, as the implementation thereof would have resulted in further

nurturing the capacity and skills sets of at least 15 PhD graduates, and assisted them in navigating and succeeding in South Africa's academic publishing sector (which requires different skills to pure academia). This is also a loss for the overall academic publishing sector, as the implementation and resource allocation would have resulted in employment opportunities for editors, academic reviewers, and would have contributed to the sustainability of this sector.

Furthermore, the NIHSS had eight Humanities Hubs to monitor during this financial year. Of these, seven were supported through ongoing projects as well as modest contract renewals. However, owing to the current funding constraints the Wits Origins Hubs could not be provided with substantial support. The lack of implementation in this regard presents lost opportunities for supporting a Hubs project that has, over the years, implemented projects that have resulted in greater access of knowledge to surrounding communities, provided for capacity development, and supported the overarching aims of preserving knowledge from being lost (such as the rock art engravings, a project that the NIHSS had been able to provide immense support to in the past).

The Institute has registered significant progress in the third quarter. The concerns noted are of unmet targets due to the delay in transfer of NSF funding of R 123 044 482 for the 2020/21 financial year. This continues to pose a serious challenge in terms of fulfilling the NIHSS mandate and strategic objectives.