

An Academic Network for Africa

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SUMMARY

An academic network is a virtual community of those involved in teaching and research at tertiary institutions. Networking between individuals has unlimited potential in advancement of teaching and research. Collaboration in teaching results in improvements in methods and content, thus improving knowledge and skills of graduate professionals; over time the entire profession is enhanced. Collaboration in research should also result in improved teaching. Local and regional expertise in research is enhanced through collaboration leading to appropriate and sustainable solutions. African academic work has lagged in global terms while the problems on the continent are myriad. It is essential to build regional capacity to address challenges on the continent. At the moment, there are various regional networks, and some continent-wide networks such as the African Geodetic Reference Frame (AFREF) but there are no networks to link career academics in the various tertiary institutions across the continent. One of the visions for the Africa Regional Network (ARN) in the next 3-year term is to establish such a network. Initially this will link individual ‘champions’ and will be based on the energies of individuals rather than attempting to influence institutions directly. The first step could be sharing of teaching resources and research areas (and research profile links) so that collaboration may be facilitated. It would be excellent if this network could have a long-term vision to promote sabbatical swaps, teaching swaps, resource sharing, programme design collaboration (perhaps resulting in improved mobility of graduate professionals), as well as research collaboration, access to research funding, and to promote quality research output in Africa for Africa.