

Vacancy: Executive Director, African Institute for Mathematical Sciences, South Africa

The African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) is a pan-African network of institutes dedicated to education, research, and public engagement. AIMS provides state of the art postgraduate training, enabling students from all over the continent to progress to careers in mathematics, science and technology. AIMS South Africa (AIMS-SA) operates in partnership with the Universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch and the Western Cape to offer Masters-level courses, conduct cutting-edge research and share mathematics and science with the wider community. AIMS-SA has an outstanding track record of scientific excellence and innovation and has been building mathematical science across Africa for over two decades. (Visit our website for more details.)

AIMS now operates six institutes across Africa – in Cameroon, Ghana, Rwanda (2), Senegal, and South Africa. Collectively, these graduate around 300 Masters and PhD students each year. The great majority of AIMS alumni remain in Africa: many now occupy leadership positions in academia, government, and industry across the continent. AIMS also operates mathematics and science teacher training programs in Cameroon, Ghana, Rwanda, and South Africa.

The strategic pillars of the AIMS network are to:

1. Produce the next generation of African leaders and educators in STEM.
2. Increase employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in STEM.
3. Create an inclusive and enabling environment for research and innovation.
4. Raise awareness of the value and importance of science among the general public.

AIMS already has over 3,500 alumni and has ambitious growth plans, including to establish another four AIMS centres and to graduate 10,000 young scientists and innovators by the end of this decade.

The Executive Director of AIMS-SA provides strategic vision, oversight and management leadership for the Cape Town based Institute's programmes and partnerships in the above context.

Role Overview

AIMS South Africa seeks a dynamic and visionary leader to inspire, motivate, and empower the diverse staff team, the international student body, the visiting lecturers and researchers to embrace its vision and mandate and contribute towards achieving its strategic goals. The incumbent will join the centre presidents from the five other AIMS centres in providing leadership to the continental network. Based at AIMS-SA, it is expected that the Executive Director will utilise her or his academic, research, and managerial expertise to guide the Institute to its next level of success. Adept at building partnerships and pursuing strategic initiatives, the Director will nurture a collaborative environment that promotes the pursuit of academic excellence, and contributes to the ongoing growth of the mathematical sciences in South Africa and beyond.



AIMS South Africa Council

David Holgate (Chair, University of the Western Cape), Daya Reddy (University of Cape Town), Grae Worster (University of Cambridge), Kerstin Jordaan (University of South Africa), Mike Giles (University of Oxford), Neil Turok (University of Edinburgh), Sibusiso Moyo (Stellenbosch University), Thandi Mgwebi (National Research Foundation), Ulrich Paquet (AIMS), Yacine Chitour (Université Paris-Saclay)

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Vision and Leadership

- Develop a vision and strategic plan that guides the Institute's future development, together with the AIMS-SA Council, and ensure that this plan is communicated and put into action.
- Provide visionary leadership that promotes and supports competitive research and a relevant, up to date educational programme.
- Pursue mutually beneficial partnerships that contribute to leveraging additional resources and fundraising to advance AIMS' strategic development as well as the wider STEM community.
- Demonstrate a commitment to quality in all the Institute's activities and inspire staff, students and visitors to pursue excellence in all they do.
- Operate in a spirit of collaboration and shared experience together with leadership peers in the AIMS network.

Academic Leadership

- Champion the direction and development of the Institute's academic programs to bolster AIMS' profile as a key locus of mathematical and scientific talent within South Africa and beyond.
- Nurture a collaborative, supportive and robust environment for scientific research and a culture of innovation.
- Oversee the Institute's educational and research programmes, ensuring that they maintain integrity, align to strategy and have contemporary relevance.

Business Development and Partnership Building

- In consultation with partners and stakeholders, develop a business plan for AIMS-SA's growth as a leading institution opening opportunities in science for Africa's youth
- Strengthen AIMS-SA's relationship with the government of South Africa to support national priorities including mathematics, science and economic development
- Work closely with the AIMS network to identify and to secure new partnerships which extend the AIMS funding base and broaden its impact
- Plan and support initiatives to grow engagement with the wider community including activities in schools, public lectures, online materials and science communication
- Build collaborations with industry in problem solving and relevant skills training to promote joint endeavours and to facilitate AIMS graduates' entry into skilled, impactful employment
- Represent AIMS-SA and advocate for its vision in national and international fora

Operations Management

- Oversee the development, implementation and delivery of AIMS-SA's business plan, together with the COO, taking key decisions regarding staff recruitment and responsibilities and the allocation of resources
- Continue to develop AIMS-SA as a model institution taking new initiatives and assisting with the growth of other AIMS centres and activities across the AIMS network
- Ensure team compliance with AIMS network policies and procedures as well as with all local laws and regulations

AIMS South Africa Council

David Holgate (Chair, University of the Western Cape), Daya Reddy (University of Cape Town), Grae Worster (University of Cambridge), Kerstin Jordaan (University of South Africa), Mike Giles (University of Oxford), Neil Turok (University of Edinburgh), Sibusiso Moyo (Stellenbosch University), Thandi Mgwebi (National Research Foundation), Ulrich Paquet (AIMS), Yacine Chitour (Université Paris-Saclay)

- Take overall responsibility for budgeting, procurement, risk management, financial reporting and future planning for the sustainability of AIMS-SA
- Present an annual report to the AIMS South Africa Council

Qualifications and experience

The successful candidate will meet the following criteria

- A research doctoral degree in the mathematical sciences or a related field
- Sustained leadership experience in the context of scientific innovation and training, particularly at the postgraduate level
- A strong research track record
- Interest in and ability to secure funding
- Experience in development, budgeting and implementation of major projects or similar undertakings
- Excellent communication and presentation skills in written and spoken English
- Evidence of effective interpersonal and relationship management skills

Desirable skills and experience

- Ability to network in the South African policy, philanthropy, and STEM research and education environments
- Demonstrated STEM education advocacy
- Knowledge of curricula, enrolment, management, and research trends in mathematical sciences
- Experience and understanding of the requirements for working with international donor funding (e.g., DFID, IDRC, USAID, World Bank, etc.)
- Development and coordination of educational programmes at the postgraduate level
- An international research reputation gained, for example, through a substantial publication record, presentations at international conferences, and sustained international collaborative activity
- Familiarity with digital pedagogy and learning technologies
- Understanding of higher education financial management practices
- Ability to work in a multilingual environment; some familiarity with French, Portuguese, or Arabic

Appointment and application procedure

The appointment is full-time, for five years, and is renewable for a further five-year term subject to approval by the AIMS-SA Trust and the AIMS International Governing Board. It is available to be filled on 1st December 2025, or as soon as possible thereafter.

To apply, please submit a cover letter and full curriculum vitae, including the names of three contactable referees, to lynn@aims.ac.za

Potential applicants may contact lynn@aims.ac.za or David Holgate (dholgate@uwc.ac.za) for further information. ***The closing date for applications is 10 October 2025.***

AIMS is committed to the pursuit of excellence, diversity, and redress. Preference will be given to candidates from the under-represented designated groups. The position comes with a competitive salary and a comprehensive benefits package.

AIMS South Africa Council

David Holgate (Chair, University of the Western Cape), Daya Reddy (University of Cape Town), Grae Worster (University of Cambridge), Kerstin Jordaan (University of South Africa), Mike Giles (University of Oxford), Neil Turok (University of Edinburgh), Sibusiso Moyo (Stellenbosch University), Thandi Mgwabi (National Research Foundation), Ulrich Paquet (AIMS), Yacine Chitour (Université Paris-Saclay)