



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Transition and Reform in Higher and Technical Education

Quality Higher Education

STORIES INSIDE

Higher Education Reforms
fast approaching **P2**

P3 DHERST Official opening of
2020

National Online Application
System **P4**

P5 National Online Selection
System

Higher Education Loan
Program **P6**

P7 Physical Infrastructure
Development at the
Universities

Meeting with Prime Minister
James Maraper **P8**

P9 2020 New intakes TESAS
Awardees

Continuing Students Awarding
2020 **P9**

P10 Future-Proofing Access,
Quality and Delivery in
PNG's Higher Education
Sector

JICA seals partnership
with DHERST **P11**





Foreword from the **MINISTER**

Higher Education, Research,
Science and Technology

It gives me great pleasure to bring you the latest updates on the higher and technical education sector that have unfolded in the first quarter of 2020.

Let me first of all give a warm welcome to all the first year students starting the academic year in all registered Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country. I believe you all have settled well as you commence the next important chapter in your life.

A warm welcome too to the continuing students, parents and guardians and all our stakeholders. Indeed, with your support, there is the promise of real development and high quality outcomes as we progress through the year.

I should also like to express my gratitude to HEIs that have complied with the Marape/Steven Government's initiative and allowed students to register under the Higher Education Loan Programme (PNG-HELP). Through PNG-HELP, my Ministry and Department will continue to provide equitable access to quality higher and technical education relative to the numbers of annual Grade 12 school leavers. The objectives of HELP are to assist as many students as possible to gain entry to universities or colleges; to offer higher quality education and, most importantly, help students to succeed once they have enrolled. Future graduates, through having benefited from the HELP scheme, will play their part in meeting the societal and economic demands facing the country as they boost the skills and knowledge required of the 21st Century workforce in Papua New Guinea.

The proposed legislation to transfer regulatory oversight of HEIs to the Department in accordance with the National Executive Council (NEC) Decision NG25/2017 was further endorsed by NEC (Decision 38/2020). The Drafting Instructions for the Reform Bill Package are now before the First Legislative Council for approval.

Preparatory work for the institutionalisation of the National Skills Development Agency (NSDA) has progressed well. The NSDA will build and create excellence in our TVET institutions and colleges with innovative technologies and a robust Quality Assurance System based on global best practice in a digital age. The NSDA strategies are to ensure Quality Education, Industry Relevance, Shared Value Initiative and Nurturing Talents and are aligned with the National Higher and Technical Education Strategic Implementation Plan (2017-2038).

Digitalisation of the higher education sector continues for my Ministry and Department. Programs delivered to date include the National Online Application System (NOAS), National Online Selection System (NOSS), Higher Education Register, and the Registrars' Module.

In December 2019, before the pandemic threat of Coronavirus (COVID-19), the Department (DHERST) convened its most senior executive and advisers to reaffirm one of DHERST's highest strategic priorities – the accelerated development and roll-out of the i-PNG Higher Education Networking (i-PNG project). The i-PNG project facilitates innovative digital solutions to long-standing administrative problems as well as providing vastly increased access to digital learning, supported by cloud-hosted i-libraries delivering customised teaching and learning resources to each higher education sub-sector. DHERST is already well-advanced in setting up and accessing the digital networking infrastructure required to facilitate the increased roll-out of both digital learning and digital administrative solutions across the higher education sub-sectors in PNG.

My Ministry and Department was the first state agency to prepare for COVID-19 after repatriating PNG students from China early this year. We are now in constant dialogue with the HEIs providing guidance on how to prepare themselves and develop strategies to protect their students and communities.

The achievements of my Ministry and Department are only made possible through the continual corporation of all the stakeholders involved, especially the HEIs, for which I offer my sincere thanks.

On a closing note, may I wish you happy reading; feedback from our readers for the improvement of the newsletter will be much appreciated.

Hon. Nick Kuman, MP
Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology



Higher Education Reforms fast approaching

LEGISLATION to reform, transform and unify the higher and technical education sector in PNG is in its final stages of development. In February, the National Executive Council approved drafting instructions for the Higher Education Reform Bills Package, a package of eight Bills to improve the governance, management and regulation of higher education institutions in PNG. Once passed, the DHERST will be working closely with effected agencies

and institutions to implement reforms over time.

Implementation Plans will be shared with agencies and institutions in the coming months covering a range of reform subjects including:

- Proposed timelines for the transition of institutions from existing Departments and agencies to DHERST oversight;
- The transfer of functions from other Departments

and agencies to DHERST;

- Arrangements for the appointment of new Governing Councils after a six-month transition period;

- The development of new lecturer terms and conditions of employment after a 12-month transition period; and

- The transfer of the National Training Council's registration and accreditation functions in relation to private training

institutions to DHERST.

The Reform Bills Package is currently being reviewed by the Office of Legislative Counsel and is expected to come before Parliament at its next sitting in May.





DHERST Official Opening of 2020

HIS Excellency, the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Kurina Mathew Vayalunkal officially opened and blessed the year 2020 for the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (DHERST) and its staff on Monday 13th January 2020 at the DHERST Office on the 4th Floor, Aopi Centre, Tower 2, Waigani Drive, Waigani.

This event has become an annual tradition since the Secretary, Professor Fr Jan Czuba, took office in 2017.

Staff were truly inspired by the messages given by His Excellency, the Apostolic Nuncio, who urged the staff on, saying, "... Let us work with God, His term and conditions ... let us start again, and don't

go backward, go forward with God ... let our giving, or our service be God-centred and not self-centred ... let us be agents of change in our lives and in our field of work."

In concluding, His Excellency wished God's blessing upon all staff and appealed to them all to work together as a team to serve in the interests of the people of Papua New Guinea, based on the core values of respect; honesty and integrity; impartiality and objectivity and dedication and righteousness.





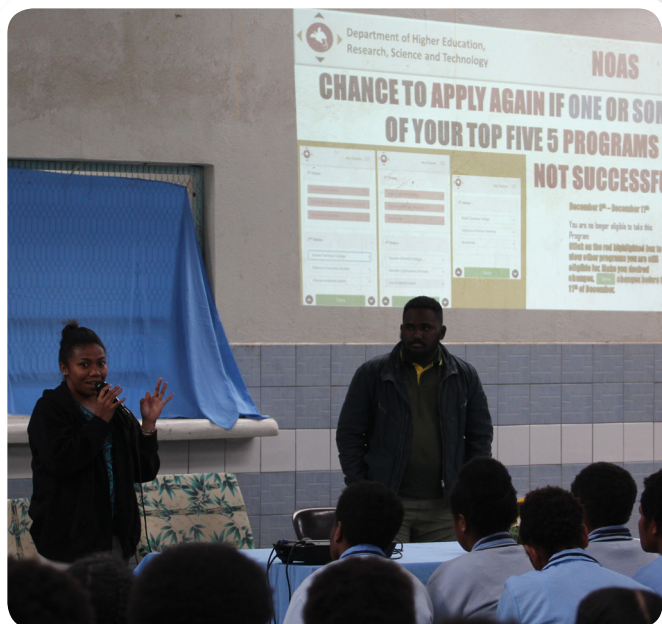
National Online Application System

THE National Online Application System (NOAS) was introduced in 2018. This system is an initiative of the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (DHERST).

Its core function is to facilitate the application process of grade 12 school leavers to tertiary institutions in Papua New Guinea. NOAS has since replaced the paper-based school leaver's form (SLF). Consequently, this move has reduced time consuming paper work and logistical expenses for the government. For this year's NOAS cycle, the system will be made available to grade 12 students nationwide in August.

As we prepare for the 2020 NOAS cycle, we are anticipating an increase in the number of secondary schools that will participate in the NOAS. This means that the number of users on the system will also increase. NOAS will accommodate an expected increase of two to three thousand students.

Planning of secondary school visits for NOAS awareness is now underway. The purpose of the awareness is to educate students, teachers and other stakeholders about the online system. It will also be a great opportunity for DHERST outreach teams to meet with students in person.

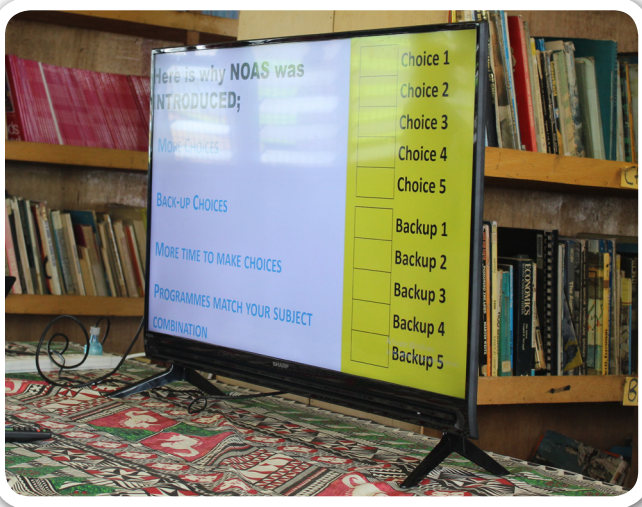


Paper-based School Leavers form

- ▶ Students apply by filling paper based forms.
- ▶ Requires pen and paper.
- ▶ Student has one month to apply for programs.
- ▶ Student can choose a maximum of three (3) academic programs.
- ▶ No backup choice option available on SLF.
- ▶ Student is given a paper booklet to help them choose academic programs they are eligible to study. Guidance officers are available for consultation.
- ▶ The paper application form does not accommodate a grace period.
- ▶ No adjustments can be made by student once paper SLF is submitted.
- ▶ Application is done in the presence of a guidance officer.
- ▶ Student forms are at risk of being stolen, lost misplaced or damaged.
- ▶ High risk of damage caused by natural or man-made disasters (rain, flood, tsunami, fire, earthquake, landslide, cyclone etc.)
- ▶ No paper-based school leavers forms were submitted to the DHERST in 2019.

National Online Application System

- ▶ Students apply via this website address: <http://apply.dherst.gov.pg>
- ▶ Requires internet connection, a digital device and login credentials.
- ▶ Student is allowed three (3) months to apply for programs.
- ▶ Student can choose a maximum of five (5) academic programs.
- ▶ Student has a backup choice to fall on in case all choices are unsuccessful.
- ▶ NOAS displays program choices based on individual student's subject combinations and eligibility. Guidance officers are available for consultation.
- ▶ NOAS features a grace period to allow students to finalise their choices based on their final marks, which increases the student's chance of getting selected for a program.
- ▶ NOAS allows grace period of four (4) days for students to apply again if one or more of five choices are not successful.
- ▶ If all five of students' program choices are unsuccessful, NOAS will display available programs within students' eligibility.
- ▶ Student application is always safe because it is stored online.
- ▶ No risk of damage caused by natural or man-made disasters (rain, flood, tsunami, fire, earthquake, landslide, cyclone etc.)
- ▶ As of 2019, 100% of grade 12 school leavers nationwide applied via NOAS.



National Online Selection System

THE National Online Selection System (NOSS) was once again launched on the 13th of December, 2019 to facilitate the 2019 selection of grade 12 school leavers into tertiary institutions for the 2020 academic year.

to provide information on program requirements, descriptions and annual fees.

All the vital information that students should be aware of was made available to them through their NOAS accounts. This gave students the opportunity to read, learn and make informed decisions about the programs they wished to apply for.

The process of selection began with the DHERST Minister, Hon. Nick Kuman, pressing the selection button. The pressing of the selection button led to the selection of 9,427 qualified students out of a student population of 27,743 to fill the available quota of 11792. The remaining 18,318 eligible students that missed out in the initial round of selection were moved to the admission pool to compete for the remaining 2365 available spaces.

Through the NOSS, a total of 205 HEI programs were made available for students to apply for through their NOAS accounts to further their studies. The available HEI programs created a total of 11,792 spaces for the grade 12 students to compete for. These programs ranged from certificates, diplomas and bachelor degrees offered by all registered universities, business and technical, polytechnic, nursing and teacher colleges under DHERST.

Prior to the selection and activation of the NOAS, NOSS was made available to all the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that were registered under DHERST





Higher Education Loan Program

THE Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) was formally established by the Government of Papua New Guinea on the 17th of December, 2019. HELP awards will be administered by DHERST. The purpose of the loan program is to help students cover costs of tertiary fees. Implementation of HELP commences this year, 2020.

In January, the DHERST Secretary, Professor Fr Jan Czuba, had officially written to all registered HEIs, reaffirming the Marape-Steven government's commitment to the HELP program. The letter was accompanied with a HELP declaration form that was distributed to HEIs' registrars' offices. The loan is optional and not a requirement. Students who wish to apply for HELP may obtain the declaration forms from their respective HEIs' regis-

trar's office. Alternatively, the same form may be downloaded from the DHERST website: <https://web.dherst.gov.pg>.

Two types of declaration forms are available online: one for the universities and the other for non-universities. Students must complete the appropriate form and submit it at their institution. Students who are enrolled in those institutions that are not registered under DHERST are not eligible for the HELP program.

The focus of HELP at this current stage will be on the undergraduate students. As the program progresses, postgraduate, masters, PhD and PNG students studying overseas will be taken into consideration.

To be eligible for this loan from the government, the student must be a citizen of Pap-

ua New Guinea, be enrolled in an institution registered under DHERST, and must study a program accredited by the National Higher and Technical Education Board (NHTEB). The NHTEB is the accrediting body operating under DHERST. All students applying for the HELP must meet the above eligibility requirements in order to proceed to the next step, which is completing the declaration Form.

To apply for a loan from the government, a student must have a tax identification number (TIN) from the Internal Revenue Commission (IRC) and a national identification (NID) card from the Papua New Guinea Civil and Identity Registry (PNGCIR). All students applying for HELP must provide these two official state documents. This is because the NID and TIN will be required to

process loan repayments to the government after the student graduates and commences employment.

FUTURE PLANS:

- DHERST will carry out nationwide awareness to educate students about the legal consequences of signing a HELP contract.
- DHERST will work closely with PNGCIR office to ensure students are issued NID cards.
- The HELP handbook and revised TESAS handbook will be published on the DHERST website
- By the end of March offer letters will be sent to eligible students who have applied for HELP.
- Official HELP application and contract forms will be uploaded on the DHERST website.

Myth

- ▶ HELP is a scholarship
- ▶ HELP can be used to pay compulsory tertiary fees
- ▶ Students can apply for HELP to register at their respective HEIs
- ▶ Students from any HEI may apply for HELP
- ▶ Students studying any programs can apply for HELP

Fact

- ▶ HELP is a government loan which the student will repay 6 months after graduation.
- ▶ Student must pay compulsory fee before applying for HELP
- ▶ Students can only apply for HELP after registration at their respective HEIs
- ▶ HELP is only available to students enrolled at DHERST registered HEIs
- ▶ HELP is not available to students who are studying (NHTEB) accredited programs only.



The focus of HELP at this current stage will be on the undergraduate students. As the program progresses, postgraduate, masters, PhD and PNG students studying overseas will be taken into consideration



Physical Infrastructure Development at the Universities

SUCCESSFUL rehabilitation and infrastructure development has been made possible in three universities through the higher education sector Public Investment Program (PIP). Precise details are set out below.

UNIVERSITY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

- (a) Main Campus, Waigani
 - Renovation of Student Records Office
 - the renovated office now offers an enhanced working environment for the administration staff.
 - Refurbishment of wet areas in Student Dormitories.
 - Refurbishment of the science laboratory at the Motupore Research Centre providing a new facility that improves the student learning environment and enhances the quality of learning for marine biology students.
 - Refurbishment of student dormitories: Toa 1, 2 and 3, with additional bed spaces for postgraduate students.

Students now have access to a much improved lodging environment.

- (a) Medical Faculty, Taurama
 - Fully refurbished MBS building with internal finishes - students have access to an improved and conducive learning environment that will enhance their academic performance.
 - Fully refurbished dormitories (A&C Blocks): a face-lift for student dormitories creates a comfortable lodging and study environment for medical students.

PACIFIC ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

- Construction of two 72 bed dormitories for male and female students accommodate at the Koiari Campus.
- Construction of a Research Centre that will hugely benefit to student learning.

DIVINE WORD UNIVERSITY

- Construction of two student dormitories enabling DWU to accommodate additional students on the main campus in Madang and at the St. Benedict's Campus, Wewak.
- A new lecture theatre for the

Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences (FMHS). Medical students now have access to a modern learning facility.

The higher education sector infrastructure development program is having significant impact in improving access and quality in PNG. From 2017 to 2019, many more teaching and learning infrastructure projects have been successfully implemented and have had a direct and beneficial impact on the increase in enrolment and quality of graduates.

This program will continue to support developments in the sector. Over time, most higher and technical education institutions will be transformed, with improved infrastructure that will provide conducive learning and teaching environments for students and staff.

The DHERST acknowledges the collaborative effort of all stakeholders in successfully achieving these milestones. Physical infrastructure development updates for other institutional types – Teachers', Nursing, Business and Technical Colleges will be provided in subsequent newsletters.



PICTURE CAPTIONS FROM TOP

- ▶ Front view of the Motupore Science (Research) Laboratory.
- ▶ Fully refurbished E-Block dormitory.
- ▶ DWU Madang campus, a 72-men dormitory fully completed commissioned and in use.
- ▶ FMHS-Simulation Room
- ▶ Contractor (Parohu Engineers) handing over the keys to the newly refurbished dormitory to the GoPNG (sponsor) through DHERST, witnessed by Department of National Planning & Monitoring, Department of Finance.
- ▶ PAU three storeys male and female student dormitory completed and commissioned.
- ▶ FMHS Lecture room





Meeting with Prime Minister James Marape



PRIME Minister James Marape being greeted upon arrival.

ON Tuesday 21 January, the Prime Minister James Marape met with representatives of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), including Vice-Chancellors and Principals, at the University of Papua New Guinea in relation to the provision of support to higher education students through the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) and the Tertiary Education Student Assistance Scheme (TESAS).

The Prime Minister was accompanied by the Deputy Prime Minister Davis Steven, Minister for Finance Reinbo Paita, Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology Nick Kuman and the Hela Governor, Philip Undialu.

The Prime Minister began his address by observing that the number of students leaving grade 8, 10, and 12 and not progressing to the next stage of education is alarming. He went on to argue strongly that there should be opportunities provided for these students through Flexible, Open and Distance Education (FODE) and also through e-learning.

This gathering was also an opportunity for the Prime Minister to end speculation that the current GoPNG Scholarships – TESAS (AES & HECAS) - will be replaced by HELP.

He was clear that TESAS (AES

& HECAS) will remain in place to reward students who are performing well academically. The Prime Minister reiterated that HELP is not compulsory, and if students' parents and/or guardians can afford to meet the fees, then they should not be compelled to apply for assistance from the HELP scheme. "Students who miss out on TESAS (AES & HECAS) can apply for HELP if they wish. The balance of TESAS can also be taken up by HELP should the students wish to explore this option," he said.

Mr Marape announced that K238 million had been appropriated for HELP and will be disbursed on a quarterly basis to higher education institutions provided that HEIs provide the necessary data for those students who are interested in accessing the HELP scheme.

Going forward, the PM announced that HELP will be linked to SME and agriculture and parents and/or guarantors should be engaged in such ventures.

The Prime Minister concluded by reflecting on digitalisation of the higher education sector in PNG as well as the need, not only for access to tertiary education but also for its sustained high quality. HEI representatives expressed their appreciation for the meeting and acknowledged DHERST's efforts in making it possible.



PRIME Minister James Marape, Professor Fr Jan Czuba and UPNG chancellor Robert Igara.



PRIME Minister James Marape being greeted upon arrival.



2020 New intakes TESAS Awardees

OUR New Intake TESAS Awardees have just embarked on a new chapter of life and are excited to have received scholarships from the Government of PNG (GoPNG) through the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (DHERST).

The government's support in this manner enables financial ease for parents, encourages

students to continue to perform well academically and increase access to quality higher and technical education in the registered Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

This year in 2020, we have a total of 11,918 students who got selected through the National Online Selection System (NOSS). This is inclusive of self-sponsored and TESAS Awardees. Due to unfilled

quota in certain programs 566 students were selected from the Admissions Pool. The Admissions Pool is a feature in NOSS that allows HEIs who have not filled in their quota when Minister for Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology presses the button. Through the TESAS Committee decision, a total of 5,599 new intake students were awarded TESAS Scholarship, 877 under the AES

category and 4,722 under HECAS category. All payment listing (boarding and lodging and student resource allowance) for new intakes in the first semester has been paid out.

To conclude, DHERST would like to wish all our TESAS students all the very best in their studies and we also wish our institutions provide the best opportunities given to them.

Continuing Students Awarding 2020

DEPARTMENT of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (DHERST) pursuit to digitalise the higher education sector requires a collaborative approach from all stakeholders.

The Department has embarked on a challenging journey and requires support from all stakeholders to implement innovative ideas and technologies used in other

parts of the globe so that we are on par with our digital education. DHERST has gradually moved out from the acute paper based syndrome to a more digitalised user friendly system. One of the recent changes done in early January was when TESAS awarding for Continuing Students was done online using the Online Registrars' Module. In which, 75 students were awarded AES,

HECAS 7,955 and 8,893 under self-sponsorship. As for the new intakes selected via the National Online Selection System (NOSS), a total of 4,160 school leavers were awarded TESAS for the year.

Therefore, total for both new and continuing students under TESAS sponsorship for 2020 stands at 12,190. However, the figure is not fixed and prone to change

depending on the total number of students' enrolled for the 2020 academic year.

Conclusively, DHERST has ventured into uncharted territories and be faced with resentments, challenges and obstacles just to prove an agenda on the national stage. However, if partners and stakeholders work in unison, its missions, goals and objectives will be achieved.





Future-Proofing Access, Quality and Delivery in Papua New Guinea's HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

DHERST & STRATCO MOU for expanding reliable, low-cost, digital access

On 23 March 2020, following several years of gradual planning and roll-out i-PNG Higher Education project on very tight sub-optimal budget allocation, DHERST signed an MOU with STRATCO LTD paving the way for expanding reliable, low-cost, digital HEI access that supports DHERST's policy modelling of how the i-PNG project will service each of the Higher Education sub-sectors (refer attached i-PNG Higher Education Sector model).

Delivery via the i-PNG model involves feeding education

and research content to routers that are then made available to respective sectors for easy access and to eliminate large internet access costs.

As a strategic opportunity in the face of the COVID-19 crisis, DHERST is already encouraging HEI's to accelerate their options for increasing enrolment via on-line learning programs. Some institutions have been deploying digital learning strategies successfully for several years (Divine Word University Campuses and Sonoma Teacher College).



PNG Dataco Managing Director Paul Komboi and Secretary for DHERST Fr Jan Czuba.

Cloud hosted i-libraries for all Higher Education Institutions in PNG

The i-PNG Higher Education model aims at transforming the Higher and Technical Education sector into a diverse and growing network of post-secondary institutions that prepare students for application of knowledge at an advanced level.

The i-PNG Higher Education model will deliver cloud-hosted libraries that feed learn-

ing and curriculum content to routers for easy download access to higher and technical education subsectors, eliminating large internet access costs. The i-PNG system also links institutions through many standardised administrative and management systems that lay the foundations for improvement across the sector. DHERST Secretary, Profes-

sor Fr Jan Czuba, comments:

"Increasing numbers of students are graduating with competitive world class qualifications as digital citizens. Graduates from PNG institutions are now leading academic program and curriculum development at PNG's first genuinely, fully digital institution, the Western Pacific University (WPU)".

At WPU the conventional library is replaced by a cloud-hosted digital library, linked to learning resource centres, equipped with digital devices and connected to reliable low-cost internet access. The need for expensive (and often unreliable) server infrastructure and costly IT maintenance support is of the past.

Why do we need to increase access, quality and online delivery?

Over the last two years alone, 31,000 eligible Year 12 students have been denied access to tertiary education that will fit them with the skills, competences and qualifications.

In all likelihood they will not enter the labour market. Sadly, increasing numbers of students will experience the same outcome each and every year unless PNG is able

to rapidly digitalize the delivery of education services. DHERST has evidenced the many prospective students who, each year in PNG, are denied access to tertiary educa-

tion due to the lack of financial resources, lack of classrooms and dormitory accommodation; and the absence of quality learning and teaching resources and qualified staff.

Innovative Administrative Solutions in addition to digital learning

At the late 2019 HEI forum to roll-out the i-PNG Registrars' Module, senior HEI leaders acknowledged DHERST's leadership in developing and facilitating digital transformation across the higher education sector. The Chair of the PNG Vice Chancellors Committee, Professor Musawe Sinabare,

commended DHERST for its determination in achieving digital transformation especially on the National Online Application System (NOAS), the National Online Selection System (NOSS), the i-PNG Registrars' Module, delivering a management system for every aspect of the student life-cycle; and

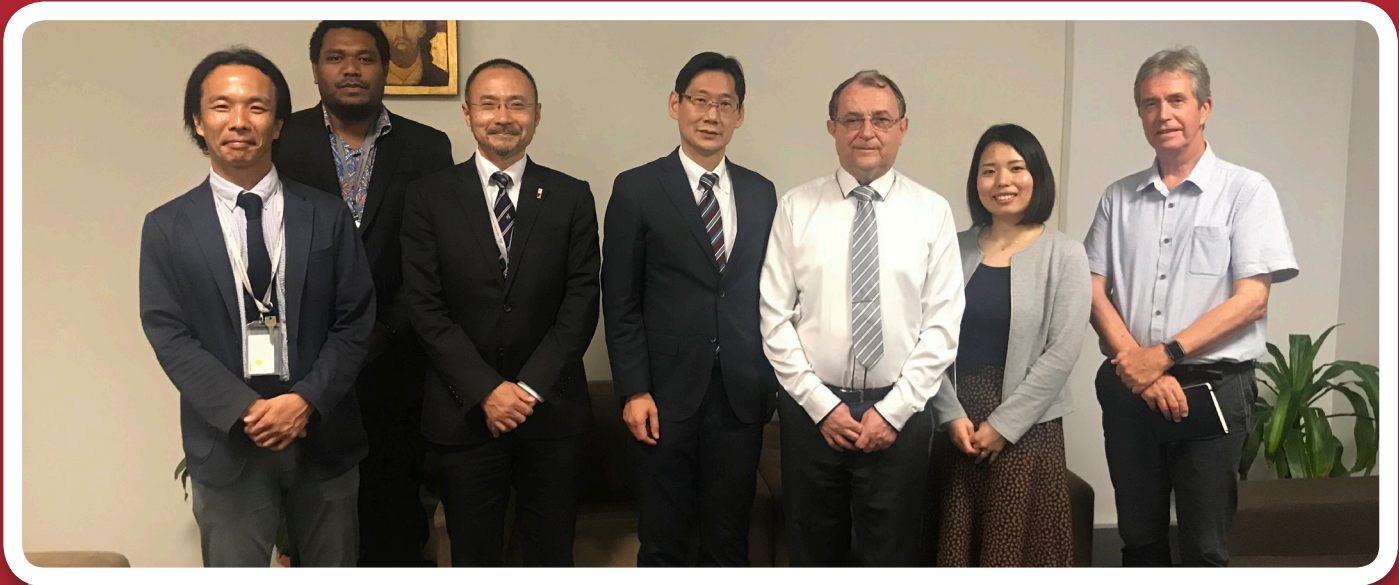
the upcoming digital roll-out of the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP). These innovations have greatly influenced and streamlined previous labour-intensive processing and reduced costs of student applications, selections and student administration in the higher education institutions.

Professor Sinabare added:

"The value and significance of a unified digital system is critical in achieving uniformity across higher education institutions on policy and administrative differences and in supporting data quality and consistency".



JICA Seals Partnership with DHERST



PROFESSOR Fr Jan Czuba (third from right) with JICA delegates.

MR JUN Sakuma, Director General of the Human Development Department of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and his team paid a courtesy visit to DHERST on Friday 14 February. Accompanied by Mr Koinuma Masato, JICA's Chief Representative in PNG,

the Director General cemented a partnership with DHERST and the Department of Education for a project entitled 'Strengthening Primary Teacher Pre-Service Education in Mathematics and Science'.

Professor Fr Jan Czuba, Secretary for Higher Edu-

cation, Research, Science and Technology and the Director General formally signed the Minutes of Meeting, marking the inception of the project that will bring JICA specialists to PNG to work alongside mathematics and science lecturers in the teacher colleges for three

years. The first members of the team are likely to arrive in June or July and will be based in DHERST.

We look forward to their coming and an exciting period of intensive curriculum development that will have lasting benefits for primary education in PNG.

