



science
& technology

Department:
Science and Technology
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



SAEON

South African Environmental
Observation Network

P.O. Box 110040
Hadison Park
Kimberley 8306
South Africa
Tel: 027 341 1002
Fax: 086 4076728
Int. Code: +27
Helga@saeon.ac.za
<http://www.arid.dirisa.org/>
www.saeon.ac.za

PhD OPPORTUNITY

SAEON Arid Lands Node and Plant Conservation Unit (University of Cape Town)

AN ASSESSMENT OF LONG-TERM CHANGE IN THE NAMA KAROO AND GRASSLAND BIOMES FROM HISTORICAL DATA SOURCES

The Department of Science and Technology, and the National Research Foundation have established a Professional Development Programme (PDP) aimed at training South African Doctoral students and Postdoctoral Research Fellows.

The **South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON)** is a research platform funded by the Department of Science and Technology and managed by the National Research Foundation. SAEON is mandated to establish and manage long-term environmental observatories; maintain reliable long-term environmental data sets; promote access to data for research and informed decision making; and contribute to capacity building. The mandate is executed through six geographically distributed nodes that are coordinated by the SAEON National Office in Pretoria.

The **SAEON Arid Lands Node** in collaboration with the **Plant Conservation Unit of the University of Cape Town** seek to appoint a PhD student with competency in vegetation/ecology. These competencies should be complemented by skills in basic GIS and fieldwork experience (able to work alone remotely under challenging climatic conditions). Knowledge of Nama Karoo and Grassland biome vegetation and landscape systems will be an advantage.

The student will be based at the Plant Conservation Unit at the University of Cape Town for the duration of the study. It is proposed that an understanding and quantification of the current status of the vegetation and flora be undertaken for the Nama Karoo and Grassland biome at sites surveyed in the past by various institutions and individuals. The data currently collected can then be compared with the historically collected data and changes over time can be quantified. The proposed survey data could also be used for future long-term surveys. The data collected should be analysed in such a way as to assess the impact of land use and/or land management changes over time by exploring changes in Plant Functional Types and growth forms. Additionally, the data can be used to assess the potential impact of global change by comparing historical trajectories of change with future projections. Change across altitudinal, climatic and land use gradients will also be investigated.

The successful candidate will develop a detailed research project encompassing the above. S/he will be expected to publish on this research in the scientific literature and to contribute to developing robust monitoring systems for the future.

The minimum requirements for PhD applicants are a MSc with a background in Vegetation and/or Ecological studies. The position is open only to South African citizens or permanent residents, is only for full-time study at the University of Cape Town, and is offered as a fixed three year bursary contract, subject to attainment of agreed annual performance targets. A grant of R180 000 pa is available to the PhD student.

Candidates should be available to start on or before the 1st February 2017.

Applicants should submit a detailed CV, the names and contact details of three references, a copy of their SA ID document, and a covering letter summarizing the reason for applying and motivating why they are well suited to take up the position, to Dr Helga van der Merwe (Helga@saeon.ac.za).

Closing date: 13 November 2016.

SAEON is committed to employment equity and redress. SAEON reserves the right not to make an appointment to the position as advertised. Only short-listed applicants will be contacted.