



RFI UKZN 02/26
Request for Information on Next Generation Campus Network Infrastructure.

RFI ADVERT DATE	01 July - 03 July 2026
RFI CLOSING DATE AND TIME FOR SUBMISSION	17 July 2026 @ 12:00
Submissions with the applicable RFI no, the project name, company name, must be submitted by email saved as a pdf document (together with the required returnables and attachments). The submissions should be emailed to: Centralprocurement@ukzn.ac.za	

Enquiries relating to this RFI shall be addressed to:

Procurement Enquires	
Name and Surname	Mr Sikhumbuzo Ngubane
Email address	Ngubanes15@ukzn.ac.za
Technical Enquires	
Name and Surname	Mr Siyabonga Sibaya
Email address	SibayaM@ukzn.ac.za

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

Next Generation Campus Network Infrastructure

University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)

Document Control

Item	Details
Document Title	Request for Information: Next Generation Campus Network Infrastructure
Organisation	University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)
Department	Information and Communication Services (ICS)

Eligibility Requirements

Due to the scale and complexity of the UKZN environment, submissions are limited to companies meeting the following criteria:-

1. Submissions are only permitted from OEMs
2. OEMs from the Gartner “Leaders” quadrant, for either 2025 or 2026, for Enterprise wired and wireless Lans, or Enterprise level OEMs that already have deployment at UKZN.
3. There should be a strong technical support structure within South Africa.
4. There should be deployments of their equipment in similar environments to UKZN within South Africa.

NOTE: Companies that meet the above requirements are to provide a covering letter expressing their interest in participating in this RFI. This covering letter should:-

- i. Indicate how they meet each of the listed requirements
- ii. Provide the necessary contact details

1. Introduction

The University of KwaZulu-Natal is a large multi-campus higher education institution with approximately 48000 students located on five remote campuses.

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) is initiating a strategic review of its campus network infrastructure to support long-term digital transformation objectives, including enhanced connectivity, cloud readiness, modern teaching and learning environments, research computing, and smart campus capabilities.

This Request for Information (RFI) seeks input from qualified technology vendors on modern, scalable, and future-ready campus network solutions.

The purpose of this RFI is not to procure services at this stage, but to:

- Understand available technologies and architectural approaches
- Evaluate migration pathways from legacy infrastructure
- Assess commercial models and funding implications

2. Background

UKZN currently operates a hybrid campus network environment with legacy copper-based access infrastructure and evolving fibre backbone components.

UKZN currently operates a large multi-vendor campus network environment comprising approximately **3,000 Cisco switching** devices deployed across core, distribution, and access layers, and approximately **3,000 Extreme Networks wireless access points** deployed across academic, residential, and administrative facilities. This existing environment represents a significant institutional investment. Any future campus network architecture must explicitly address **coexistence, interoperability, and phased migration strategies** that preserve and extend the value of the current infrastructure.

Challenges include:

- Aging copper-based access networks
- Increasing demand for high-speed connectivity
- Expansion of digital learning platforms
- Growth in IoT and smart campus requirements
- Increasing cybersecurity and monitoring requirements

The university seeks to transition toward a high-performance, fibre-enabled, and software-defined network architecture.

3. Objectives of the RFI

The objectives of this RFI are to:

- Identify modern campus network architecture options suitable for UKZN
- Explore fibre-first transition strategies
- Evaluate WiFi 6 and WiFi 7 technologies
- Assess network management platforms (on-premise vs cloud vs hybrid)
- Understand licensing and commercial models
- Review network monitoring and AI-driven operations tools
- Evaluate vendor support and training models in South Africa

4. Scope of Requirements

Vendors are invited to provide information on the following key areas.

4.1 Campus Network Architecture

Vendors must provide proposed designs covering:

- Core network infrastructure
- Distribution layer design
- Access layer modernisation
- High availability and redundancy
- Scalability for future growth
- Integration with existing infrastructure
- Interoperability with existing Cisco switching infrastructure
- Multi-vendor campus network design considerations
- Standards-based Layer 2 and Layer 3 integration (e.g., OSPF, BGP, EVPN, VXLAN, 802.1X)
- Incremental deployment and migration approaches, avoiding mandatory wholesale replacement of existing infrastructure

4.2 Fibre-First Transition Strategy

UKZN is evaluating a phased transition from copper-based access networks to fibre-based infrastructure.

Vendors should address:

- Migration strategies from copper to fibre
- Hybrid coexistence models
- Cost implications and lifecycle benefits
- Deployment timelines and risk considerations
- Campus-wide fibre rollout approaches

4.3 End-Point Connectivity and Fibre Access Units

Vendors must provide information on:

- Fibre Access Unit (FAU) technologies
- Direct fibre-to-device connectivity models
- Integration with Ethernet-based devices
- Scalability and maintenance considerations

4.4 Wireless Networking (WiFi 6 vs WiFi 7)

Provide comparative analysis of:

- Performance capabilities
- Device density handling
- Coverage and throughput
- Energy efficiency
- Deployment complexity
- Cost implications
- Wireless Deployment Context:

UKZN operates an established enterprise wireless environment consisting predominantly of Extreme Networks wireless access points managed through centralized platforms.

Vendors must explicitly state whether their proposed wireless solution supports:

- Coexistence with the existing Extreme Networks wireless deployment
- A phased migration strategy
- A full wireless replacement, including clear cost, operational, and risk implications

4.5 Network Management Platforms

Vendors must outline available models:

- On-premises management platforms
- Cloud-based management platforms
- Hybrid management approaches
- Automation and orchestration capabilities
- AI-driven network optimization features
- Integration with existing Cisco and Extreme Networks management platforms
- Operational impact during transition between management systems
- Options for preserving or migrating historical telemetry, monitoring, and analytics data.

4.6 Licensing Models

Provide detailed information on:

- Subscription-based licensing models
- Perpetual licensing models
- Feature-based licensing
- Impact on total cost of ownership (TCO)
- Scalability of licensing structures
- Vendors must detail the impact of proposed licensing models on existing Cisco and Extreme Networks investments, including options for license portability, co-termining, conversion, or parallel operation during migration periods to avoid duplicated costs.

4.7 Network Monitoring and Analytics

Vendors should describe:

- Real-time monitoring tools
- AI/ML-based analytics platforms
- Predictive fault detection
- Performance dashboards
- Security monitoring integration

4.8 Implementation and Distribution Models

Provide details on:

- Deployment methodology

- Local South African partner ecosystem
- OEM support structures
- Hardware distribution models
- Pricing frameworks

4.9 Local Support and Training

Vendors must outline:

- Local technical support availability
- On-site engineering capabilities
- Training programs for IT staff
- Knowledge transfer strategies
- Certification pathways

4.10 Cybersecurity and Network Resilience

Vendors are requested to include:

- Built-in security architecture
- Zero Trust integration capabilities
- Network segmentation approaches
- Threat detection and response tools

4.11 Smart Campus and Future Readiness

Vendors should describe capabilities supporting:

- IoT integration
- Smart building systems
- AI-driven campus operations
- Location-based services
- Digital learning environments

5. Vendor Information Required

Vendors must include:

- Company profile

- Global and local presence
- Higher education references
- South African deployments
- Strategic partnerships

6. Evaluation Considerations (Non-Exhaustive)

UKZN will consider the following:

- Technical capability and architecture alignment
- Total cost of ownership
- Scalability and future readiness
- Local support capability
- Vendor stability and roadmap
- Innovation and digital transformation alignment

7. Submission Requirements

Vendors will be required to submit:

- Detailed technical response per section
- High-level architecture diagrams
- Indicative pricing models
- Deployment strategy
- Support and training approach

Vendors must further ensure that all submissions and proposals are clearly separated into:

- (i) Switching (Wired LAN) environment
- (ii) Wireless (WiFi) environment

Each section must include distinct architecture designs, licensing models, cost breakdowns, and support considerations.

8. Disclaimer

This Request for Information (RFI) is issued solely for information gathering purposes and does not constitute a commitment to procure goods or services.

UKZN reserves the right to:

- Modify or withdraw this RFI at any time
- Not proceed with any vendor engagement following this RFI
- The University reserves the right to modify, withdraw, or cancel this Request for Information (RFI) at any time without prior notice.
- Participation in this RFI does not guarantee inclusion in any subsequent procurement process.
- The University is seeking information that reflects integration with an existing enterprise network environment, and vendors should not assume a greenfield deployment.
- Vendors must clearly outline how their proposed solutions coexist with or migrate from existing network infrastructure and vendor technologies.
- Responses should include transparent licensing models, migration approaches, and cost implications, particularly where replacement or coexistence with existing infrastructure may be required.
- The information collected through this RFI will support technical evaluation, financial planning, and governance review processes.

9. Conclusion

UKZN is embarking on a strategic transformation of its campus network infrastructure to enable a modern, secure, and high-performance digital environment.

We appreciate vendor participation in this RFI and look forward to reviewing innovative and forward-thinking solutions that will shape the future of the university's digital ecosystem.